





LIBRARY OF CONGRESS.

Class. PZ3 Copyright No. ....

Shelf. M236B

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA.

















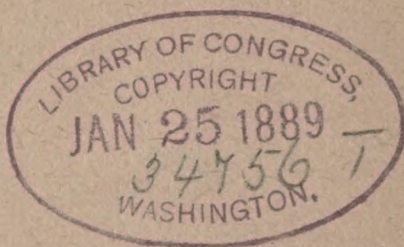


# BROKEN LIVES

---

— BY —

CYRUS F. McNUTT.



---

CHICAGO:  
T. S. DENISON, PUBLISHER,  
163 RANDOLPH STREET.

8



PZ3  
.M236B

---

COPYRIGHT, 1888, BY T. S. DENISON.

---



## EXPLANATORY INTRODUCTION.

On reading the will of the late Felix Munro, Esq., it was found to contain a reference to certain *Memorabilia*, "desultory records of which," the document proceeded to say, "will be found in a package of my papers, marked *Memoirs*."

The testator, after saying that he knew not if these records possessed other than a strictly private interest, proceeds to commit the disposition of them to the discretion of his executor, nominating the present writer to that trust.

That Mr. Munro contemplated the publication of these records as a contingency, more or less probable, there are evidences in the MS. itself.

After a deal of patient search—for the records had been carelessly, or by design, bestowed in an obscure alcove—the executor at last fell upon them.

Not until after much consideration, and having taken the advice of others better qualified than himself to judge of such matters, did he finally determine to cause their publication. It was easily apparent that the writings contained accounts of incidents and episodes, at once pathetic, stirring, and dramatic. But there were also manifest in the style of their composition, a crudity, a want of symmetrical structure, and an inequality in the treatment of the many incidents, which it was feared so marred them as a whole, as to forbid their publication. There was, moreover, it was thought, in the style of treatment of certain of the more tragic of these incidents an intensity, which, while natural enough in the circumstances of the author, nevertheless renders the perusal of the account of them, painful.

It was, however, believed that notwithstanding these defects and faults, these writings yet contained such merit, though by no means so obvious as these



and other demerits, as forbade their consignment to oblivion.

Brought at last to this view, the executor now, but not without many misgivings, lays them before the public.

In doing so, he has not felt at liberty to in any wise change the MS., but has left it as it came from the hands of his friend, the author. He has ventured only to designate as "Chapters" those divisions between which the author left spaces; and to prefix to each of these, sometimes a sentence, sometimes two or three, to indicate in a very general way the subject matter of which the chapter treats.



## BOOK 1.

---

# BROKEN LIVES.

---

## CHAPTER I.

OTTO CASTELAR.

Like all pioneer communities that in which Elsie and I were born, had its odd personages and mysterious families. It would have been a rare settlement in those days of the new West that had not these: Persons and families of unknown antecedents and the mystery about whose lives was impenetrable. Such people never appear to understand that it would be better to tell their neighbors the truth, however ugly, since it is usually not half so bad as those neighbors will surmise, if left to unaided conjecture.

It was a mysterious family that came into our settlement.

The husband and father was a man in ten thousand—a Scotchman of gigantic proportions, brawny and hairy as an animal, though his face was handsome and of noble aspect. His family comprised several children and a wee wife, as fragile as her lord was stalwart. She could not have weighed above ninety pounds, was fair of hair, had blue eyes, and skin like that of a month old infant. My mother always spoke of her as her “little pink neighbor.” The voice of this child-like creature was low and soft as the purr of a well-fed kitten. So my mother used to say, when about to visit her; “I must go over and hear my little pink neighbor pur a bit; come along, Felix!”

The children of this uncommon pair were like neither—being like both.



James McAlpin, for such was the name he bore while among us, moved into our neighborhood, it was said, shortly before my own advent. He sought out the most obscure and unlikely site in all the region about, where he erected a rough stone house and furnished it in a style to astonish his simple neighbors. The three or four rooms abounded in massive bedsteads; great chairs, so heavy that the little pink wife could scarcely move them about; and bureaus, large and costly enough to have served in those days a department at Washington. The doors of the dwelling were provided with enormous keys, bars and bolts, the only things of the kind for miles around; for in those primitive days of simple honesty, little was there need for these. The wooden latch, with buckskin thong attached and hanging through an eyelet-like hole, on the outside, bidding the visitor welcome, sufficed for the other dwellings of the settlement.

Having provided this home for his family, Mr. McAlpin, as I have heard said, disappeared, returning at intervals of sometimes months, and sometimes a year, for short visits to his family. During these absences the family was under the care of a man—William was the only name he bore—as mysterious as McAlpin himself.

Of course, this strange conduct of the Scotchman was a fruitful source of speculation and gossip. All sorts of mysterious and awful things were whispered of him.

But all this concerns us little, since this family is mentioned, only because through it was introduced into that humble neighborhood, one, a strange, far-fetched exotic, whom this history concerns; and whose behavior changed the current of other lives, an account of which, more or less in detail, dependent on the strength a gracious Providence shall vouchsafe to me, I shall essay to record.

During one of the protracted absences of our neighbor, my father received a letter, bearing a foreign stamp and postmarked at a city with an unpronounceable name. A few hours after, the cover was on the farm wagon and my father had said:



"Felix, get on your smartest clothes and be ready to start within a half hour to F——," our county town, some fifteen miles away.

The first railroad of the State was then in process of construction, but lacked some forty miles of having reached F——; so it was reached then from the end of the railroad as constructed, by stage.

When well on our way, my father said: "Felix, you can read writing, and I am proud of you that you can, seeing that there are few youngsters of twelve about here that can do as much. I am not just certain that I have the right run of this letter I've received from some outlandish place, from our neighbor, Mr. McAlpin. Try if you can read it for your father."

I took the missive eagerly. It was for most part written fairly well; so that by a little study and by spelling the harder words, I was able to make it out. There was nothing in it to indicate where it had been written. It ran thus:

"MY DEAR MR. MUNRO:—I have just learned that a friend of mine died lately, leaving a little son homeless and friendless. I have directed that the child be sent to my home. It is to be carried to F—— and placed in the care of the landlord of the 'F—— House,' until called for. Will you meet it there, as I shall be unable to reach home in time, as it will arrive sometime between the first and fifth of May, and I can trust this matter to nobody but yourself. Be good enough to take your Felix along as company for the little fellow.

"The child's name is Otto Castelar. His parents were my dear friends, though I have never seen the unhappy little waif. I have written to my wife on the subject, and that you will bring the child to her.

"Very truly your friend and neighbor,

"JAMES MCALPIN."

"Ah, yesterday was the fifth!" exclaimed my father, as I ended. And so it was.

We reached F—— in the night, and put up at the "F—— House." We learned that on that evening a child had arrived, in charge of a woman, and was then in the house, though the woman had, after taking leave of it with many demonstrations of grief and affection, departed on the out-bound stage, within an hour after her arrival.

The next morning I was up betimes, anxious to see my future playfellow; for while nothing had been said



as to the child's age, the fact that it was a boy, and that McAlpin had suggested that I should come along, had been enough to fill me with many pleasant expectations, and settle in my mind that the "child" was a lad like myself.

We were soon awaiting in the sitting room of the inn, the appearance of the little stranger, for the landlord had sent to bring him. Presently he walked in. My father was as imperturbable a man as one would see in a day's journey, but this apparition so staggered him that he uttered an exclamation of surprise, before he could arrest it. Then he looked sharply at me. A glance sufficed. He saw that I had made the same discovery as himself.

The lad was at least a head taller than I; as straight as an arrow, and dark as a Spaniard. His hair, as black as a raven's wing, hung in waves and curls to his shoulders. But this aspect of the lad, though striking enough, did not cause the exclamation from my father. That was inspired by the fact, that in every feature and expression of his countenance, the boy was the perfect image of James McAlpin! It mattered not that McAlpin was the fairest of fair-skinned Scotsmen; that his eyes were blue, while those of the boy were dark as night; that his hair was light and straight, while that of the young stranger was raven and curly, and that his complexion was ruddy, while the boy's was bloodless; there the lad stood, like an image in bronze of the stalwart Gael!

We took our breakfast and were presently on our way homeward. After the first greetings, the lad was persistently silent; but the traditional "dancing master" could not have managed his movements with more grace. Nor could a courtier have employed politer or apter phrase than that in which he saluted and thanked my father and myself. There was just a suspicion of a foreign accent in his speech.

To all my efforts to engage him in conversation, his responses were simple yeas and nays, but uttered with studied politeness, and with what I came to believe, an affected gentleness; though I should not have been able to use so fit speech in giving my notion of it.



Finding that he would not talk, I fell to studying furtively his appearance, endeavoring to time my observations so as not to appear rude. He, however, became aware of my scrutiny, and was scarcely able to disguise his annoyance. The more I observed his face, the more it impressed me. It was strangely strong for the face of a lad of his years, which might have been fourteen or more. He at length appeared to grow indifferent to my inspection of him, and sat gazing listlessly, with a far off look in his dark eyes, toward the distant hills. It may have been the working of my boyish imagination, always reckoned too active, but I fancied at times that I could see something like an expression of cruelty lurking about the corners of his mouth. And I am sure I made a discovery of what I have always regarded a phenomenon, in this strange lad's eyes. If subsequent observations had not confirmed the impression then made, I should no doubt have referred that impression to fancy. But too well, alas, I know it was not fancy! I discovered that he had what naturalists call in birds, "nictitating membranes." He appeared to be able at will, to draw this misty film over his eyes, as the goose and other fowls do, whereby he could effectually hide their expression. Afterward I often saw him, at such times as he desired to close himself against observers or to make an end of inquiry, play this trick.

If this species of eye were found in such numbers as to require or deserve classification, I should with my present learning be inclined to name it the "Anserine Eye." But as this, in my own experience, was an absolutely unique instance, I content myself with the foregoing imperfect description.

At last, tiring of these observations of the stranger, I tried again to draw him into conversation. And in my sympathy for the lonely lad (for I had observed that several times he had sighed deeply, though very gently, and I fancied he was recalling the painful parting of yesterday) I thought to call him by his name, as a manner of address best calculated to penetrate his reserve. I said accordingly :



"Well, Otto, what do you think of our hills and forests?" He turned his gaze upon me, drew the membranes over his eyes and answered as gently as his soon-to-be foster mother, Helen McAlpin herself might: "I am used to being called *Master Otto*, if you please."

Determined not to be put out so, I said:

"Then, *Master Otto*, what think you of our hills and woods?"

Again he turned his eyes upon me, and from behind their masque looked to see if I was accepting his suggestion in good faith, and being satisfied, answered:

"They are quite interesting, but do not compare with the scenery along the Hudson, nor that along the rivers of—"

But he did not say what country or place.

This ended all effort to draw him out. Nor was there further discourse, until when within a few miles of home, my father explained to him how Mr. McAlpin, who had been the friend of his parents, had requested us to meet him at F——, and carry him to his, McAlpin's home, which my father assured the lad would be, he had no doubt, a pleasant home for him. As my father said this, the lad gazed at him from behind his masque, and I fancied I saw a look of mingled incredulity and scorn run up from the corners of his mouth and take shelter in his eyes behind that membranous barricade.

For some reason my father did not wish to, himself, deliver the boy to the McAlpin household. He, therefore, when we arrived home, placed him in the care of my elder brother and myself, to be carried on to his destination.

When, as master of ceremonies, I presented him to the good little Mrs. McAlpin, the poor woman staggered backward, while her face grew first white, then scarlet, and her lips jerked and quivered as if she would break into tears. After saluting her in his courtly manner, the lad stepped back and deliberately gazed at her from behind the curtains which he had again drawn over his eyes.

A few weeks after, when McAlpin had returned and



had called to see my father, I heard him, salutations ended, say :

“ Well, neighbor Munro, had I ever seen the lad, I should have been saved the telling you that blundering falsehood. The child is my son! Nature has been more generous and faithful to the little fellow than I meant to be; she declines to keep my secret.” And his voice was a little husky.

Beyond this simple, frank confession, nothing I think was ever said on the subject.

---

## CHAPTER II.

### ELSIE.

When autumn came and the brief term of school opened, Otto, the stranger lad, accompanied his foster brother, Bruce McAlpin, thither. But it was directly manifest that the wrinkled old teacher could teach him nothing; the lad was already a far better scholar than the master. Indeed, it was soon apparent that that doughty old tyrant, so ready with his *beech* where the rest of us were concerned, stood in awe of this swarthy youth, with eyes of night and raven hair. But it ought in justice be said, that the lad used his power with *finesse*, and so subjected the master to as little chagrin as possible, and yet have his own way.

He and I gradually grew better acquainted, and there came to be at length a sort of armed friendship between us, that no doubt would in time have grown cordial enough, but for what befell.

Elsie's father was the chief person of the young settlement—its spiritual guide as well as arbiter of all those disputes that must needs arise in every community, in respect of material things. Though himself a scholar of excellent attainments, having been regularly educated for his vocation, Mr. Cradock sent his children to the great log schoolhouse, surrounded by



forests, to share with his neighbors' children such knowledge as the poorly equipped old master dispensed at the reasonable stipend of ten dollars per month.

It was on the Monday morning of the third week, as I yet remember, that Elsie came with her older sisters. To me, her advent was as the visit of an angel. She was but a few months my junior in age. Our parents had all our lives been nearest neighbors and closest friends, and neither of us had known any playmate than the other, until old enough to go to school. We could not remember when the older children of the neighborhood began to tease us about each other; while in my father's household Elsie was known by no other name than "Felix's sweetheart;" a fact of which I was vain enough—as what lad of sensibilities and taste would not have been, indeed? For a no more lovable creature than Elsie can be imagined. Rather tall of her age, lithe and supple, with a face fairly beaming with intelligence; dark blue eyes, bubbling full of mirth and fine spirits, happy as a bird and looking as ready to fly. And withal, such a "glory" of golden brown hair as kept you wondering how it could by any means be tucked away in the quaint, old-fashioned, speckled sunbonnet, in whose depths, if you looked long enough, you would see all I have described, besides two rows of pearls between rubies—that were just her teeth and lips.

"Books" had already been called, and I was sitting on one of the high, but narrow, rail-like, backless benches, by the side of Master Otto, who, if he did not like me, cared for no one else. Elsie, going to the corner set apart for the wraps of the girls, had deposited her speckled sunbonnet, and with a toss of the head that settled her golden sea of hair about her shoulders, moved with noiseless grace and unshod feet, wet with the morning dew, to a seat on the "girls' side," and near the corner of the room. Then beginning at the end next the door on the "boys' side," she glanced modestly and swiftly down the long row until our eyes met; a nod of recognition, a smile accompanied by a conscious little blush, and she settles down and looks



demurely at the McGuffey Reader before her, while I nod, smile and blush in turn, and then sit swinging my feet faster than ever to keep time with the accelerated movements of my foolish heart.

But I am aroused from my blissful dream, by the nervous, impatient movements of Otto, whose very existence I had for the moment forgotten. I look up into his face; its aspect is startling! He is looking down upon me, with eyes full of an expression of—what? I could not name it then, and since later on the reader will know as well as I, I shall not name it now. But as I looked full of surprise into his eyes, he seemed to remember himself; he slowly inclosed the baleful light with the strange membrane, already mentioned. Then, affecting an indifference, and smiling as if to say, “Aha! I have detected your secret!” he asked, but his voice was perturbed, despite his effort:

“Who is she?”

I was unsuspecting, as an honest lad ought to be, and so answered simply enough:

“It’s Elsie Cradock.”

“Your sweetheart,” he added, with an involuntary sneer.

“That’s what they call her, but we’re just good friends, that’s all,” I answered, with an embarrassed blush.

“Yes; no doubt!” he replied, still with that spiteful sneer.

No more was said, but more than once I detected Master Otto gazing at Elsie with an expression of eyes that made my blood leap and set my face a burning. And then I would chide myself for begrudging the poor stranger lad a look even, at the sweet face. But when I would recall the strange light in his eyes, it distressed me; though in my simplicity, I did not understand its meaning.

At noon recess I saw that Otto kept pretty closely about where I was; a thing unusual. Before this, if either sought the other, it was I who sought him. But I understood, he suspected that I would seek occasion to speak with Elsie, and he wished to meet her. The



rules forbidding the commingling of the boys with the girls were rigid, and their infraction punished by the lash. That is to say, the master would "beech" the lads. "For of course," he would argue, "the girls are not to blame. They'll stay to themselves, if you'll let 'em. And it's my business to see that you let 'em," he would add, as he laid about him with his gad. But even this rigor was not sufficient barrier, where both sides contrived to surmount it. And since Elsie and I had been used to playing together from our earliest recollection, we could not quite understand the wrong of it. The recess was not half gone till we found ourselves strolling along the bank of the creek that ran through the valley below the schoolhouse.

"Who is that black boy that sits beside you, Felix?" Elsie, our greeting ended, asked, with a look of repugnance on her face.

When I had answered, "I don't like him!" she said.

"Why don't you like him?" I asked, interestedly.

"I don't like—it's his eyes, I think; I don't like his eyes. They look wicked—like a snake's. Ugh!" and she affected a shudder.

"Well, don't talk about him!" I said, impatiently. "Here, we've not seen each other for a whole age, two weeks at least, and are breaking the rules, too, and talking about nothing but this stranger."

As I spoke, Otto came from we knew not where, into our path, meeting us. In another moment he was lifting his hat in salutation. His sudden appearance, and the suspicion that he had heard every word we had said, so embarrassed me—for the fellow had a strange, half mastery over me—that I did not know what I was about. But he brought me to, with a look, as if he would say: "Why don't you introduce me?" I stammered, "Elsie, this is my friend, Master Otto Castelar." I had never failed since that first acquaintance to call him "Master Otto." I did not dream then that it was a concession to his assumption of superiority; though I think that Elsie with her keener insight suspected this and declined, both then and after, to bestow the deferential title. She greeted him, now by a slight but charmingly simple curtsy.



"Miss Elsie," he began, drawing near and lifting a handkerchief containing paw-paws and a handful of hackberries, "I have been foraging,"—a new word to us—"in the forest, and shall be delighted to share my spoil with you and Felix." And he selected the ripest and most enticing of the paw-paws and offered it to Elsie, who shrank back, crying:

"Excuse me, please! I detest paw-paws, of all things. Ugh! Why, a hog won't eat one; will it, Felix!"

"So much the more reason why a nice little lady like yourself, should! There are few things that nice little girls and swine eat, in common," he retorted gaily, laughing a strange, low, soft laugh, while Elsie blushed scarlet. Then he took a handful of the berries, and tendered them. Elsie accepted these and affected to be pleased with them. And we turned and walked toward the playgrounds. As we drew near, talking by starts and pauses, I suggested that we had better quit Elsie's company, lest we should get ourselves "beeched."

"I shall do nothing of the kind!" said Master Otto. "I dare old Wrinkles to chastise me!"

This, though said in the softest of accents, had the effect to shock both Elsie and myself. To hear the dear old teacher, whom everybody spoke of reverently as "the Master," called "old Wrinkles," though his face was crossed and criss-crossed with seams, sounded like sacrilege; though we should not, to be sure, have known the offence by such name, then.

Elsie looked quickly at me, while a little, half angry, half frightened frown knitted her pretty brows. Seeing the effect of his speech, Master Otto laughed the same soft, gurgling laugh as he went on, "Why, you children reverence this ignorant old fellow as if he were a sage. He's an old fool, *I* say! *He* teach anybody! Bah!"

The lad was more than half right. But it sounded awful to us, to whom the old man was just "*the Master*," and so we were glad enough to part company with the blasphemer, which we did at the playground; for I



would not quit Elsie's side till Otto had, beeching or no beeching.

As we walked homeward this evening, Elsie said while speaking of Otto: "O, Felix, isn't he awfully handsome?"

"What do you mean, Elsie?" I cried. "What *do* you mean by using such words?—*awfully* handsome! Who ever heard the like?"

She looked up at me with wide open, astonished eyes, and her face full of innocence, saying, "Why, Felix—why—don't you think him handsome?"

"O, yes, to be sure; aw—fully handsome!" I answered, making eyes. But the next moment I was sorry, for Elsie's chin quivered as if she were about to cry.

I had not wisdom to understand that the dear child had spoken of the youth precisely as she might of her father's fine horse, or other well-favored animal.

There stood on the bank of the creek, near the schoolhouse, a great beech tree, with wide-spreading and far-reaching branches extending sheer across the stream, which at that point was narrow, but carrying between its high and steep banks water some feet in depth. These limbs, by the aid of some of the larger boys, had been drawn down to be used by the girls as swings, and by means of which they could swing from bank to bank, across the stream; a charming, if hazardous sport.

A few days after her first meeting with the stranger, it chanced that Elsie, while swinging had, by a false start, fallen short of the thither bank, alighting in mid-stream. With other lads I was playing ball a hundred yards away. Having observed the venturesome nature of the sport, and knowing that Elsie was engaged in it, and as daring as the next one, I had felt no little uneasiness. Thus it came to pass that when the accident befell, and the cries of Elsie's companions arose, I fairly flew to the scene, preceding the foremost of my companions by some moments.

Elsie was clinging to the limb, her white face alone visible above the water, her lips tightly compressed,



and her eyes shining like two small stars. I was an excellent swimmer and encumbered by nothing but my shirt and trousers. Pausing only long enough to direct one of the larger girls, who appeared not to have entirely lost her head, how to aid me, I plunged into the stream. I seized the limb above where Elsie held it, and speaking a word of encouragement which she answered with a brave look, that I can plainly recall at this moment, I began to struggle toward the shore. While the current, though luckily by no means swift, made the task a difficult one, still I gained at each struggle and was soon in reach of aid from the bank, and the young lady already mentioned, was preparing to render it, when suddenly, as if he had fallen from the tree above us, appeared the dark form of Otto, stripped to shirt and trousers, and about to leap into the stream. I cried to him to take hold of the limb. He paid no heed, but dropped straight as a plummet, feet foremost into the edge of the stream, when stooping, he seized Elsie and lifted her onto the bank, as if instead of a well-grown girl of twelve or more, she had been an infant in arms. And as he did so he gave me such a look of triumph, mingled with hate and contempt, as I had never seen in human face before, and as I confess, frightened me.

Elsie's bonnet had been lost and was being slowly borne away, discovering which, and just as I had reached the shore, Otto darted quickly past me, plunged into the stream, rescued and brought it, and, bowing with the air and grace of a cavalier, handed it to its bedrabbled and shivering owner; then taking her arm, saying that she must go to the schoolhouse and dry her clothing, he led her in triumph, away.

I followed, a little crestfallen but in no wise blaming Elsie; for I was sure that she would greatly prefer my company.

But what presently happened put me more than even with his officious cavaliership. For when Elsie standing by the fire saw me come in, completely soaked, the water yet dripping from my clothing, she gave me such a look of tender sympathy, and said: "O, Felix,



I am so sorry! Are you cold?" at the same time making room by her side for me, in such a way, as filled my heart as full of delight as it did Master Otto's of envy. His face grew darker and his eyes were full of a strange light which he presently shut in behind that sinister membrane. But the next day he was so cordial and polite toward me, and frank and open in his treatment of Elsie, evincing toward both such simple, good fellowship only, that I forgot the disagreeable sensations his behavior of yesterday had inspired, and was ready to be on the most friendly footing; for there was much about him when in this amiable mood, to admire. Besides, he was far above the dead level of the other lads of the neighborhood, and—well, perhaps I was too; and so bating our rivalry for favor in Elsie's eyes, we ought reasonably, to have been cronies.

One other episode of our school days together, will serve to exhibit the characters of the three children, whose dramatic, nay, tragic histories in after years, it is my purpose to set forth in these *memoirs*.

It was the very last of September. The day had been as hot as midsummer. To one the least observant, there must have been through the whole day ominous signs of what was to befall. But the old teacher was far too busy beeching refractory lads and sweating over yet more refractory sums in vulgar fractions, with which some of the larger boys delighted to puzzle him, to take note of things external. But as the sun was setting—for that luminary never found the master away from the schoolhouse—there began to fill the air, gather in the sky and to fall upon all the earth, the awesome forecasts of a storm. The school was quickly dismissed and the children, more than threescore in number, and of all sizes, poured through the narrow door, the one outlet. Elsie was the only one of the Cradock children in attendance this day, a fact I had dwelt on with delight through the tedious hours, for our ways lay along the same paths, and it chanced that I, too, was alone. By going somewhat out of his way, which he often did, Master Otto would traverse the same road with us for the first mile or so; a thing I was sure he would do



this evening. For since the incident at the creek, he had not abated his friendly behavior, and we were on the best of terms.

As we made our way through a narrow clearing, we began to hear in the far northwest the rumbling of distant thunder, though the skies above and around us were cloudless. Near the earth the air was still and stifling, while higher up it was in some commotion; for a hawk sailing with the wind above us, moved with the speed of an arrow; while far above that, careened an eagle in the teeth of the storm, while near us again the blue jays scurried and screamed, and the ravens croaked as they flew restlessly from tree to tree in the deadening, and the smaller birds chirruped uneasily as they flitted from point to point and at last rose in a body and made straight for the shelter of the deep wood. And as we reached the forest we heard far up a solemn moan, as if the swaying trees were in travail, while the leaves near us, nodded and quivered as if shaken with laughter; or turned their veined and corrugated sides up to the breeze as if challenging the storm to smite them if it dared. And then through rifts in the branches and foliage, we saw near the horizon in the northwest the rising storm clouds; some black as ink, others yellow and murk, and on the faces of these the lurid, forked lightning played a thousand antics, to be followed presently by rolling, bellowing thunder; distant, but the more impressive for that. But one thing remained to support our courage: the sky above us was still cloudless, and flooding the landscape with that strangely beautiful light, which foretells swift and rending winds.

Otto's tall, dark figure strode ahead, I next, and Elsie at my heels, and all silent as specters.

Suddenly Elsie plucked my sleeve, saying, under her breath: "Felix, listen! What's that?"

"It's an owl," I answered, for I heard what seemed the distant cry of an owl.

"No; it's Cooney!" And as she spoke there came in view along the path meeting us, a figure which seen under other circumstances would have provoked in us no end of merriment. It was that of a great rough,



freckled-faced, tow-headed fellow, astride a horse so small that the feet of the rider, had he straightened his legs, would have touched the ground. On his head was a crownless hat, through which the tow-like hair stood up. The face inspired the beholder with a disposition to scream with laughter. The nose was something more than pug; it was "celestial." The eyes were very small, but blinked good humoredly; the lashes and brows were almost white, while the whites were pinkish. But it was the mouth that more strikingly distinguished the face and gave it its character and expression. It was enormous, being in fact a horizontal slit under the pug nose, clear across the narrow face, and was simply an indefinable mass of grotesque laughter. It was said that even when he wept his mouth wore the expression of merriment; and as he often laughed till the tears would stream over his face, no one was sure that he had cried, ever, in all his life. He had halted in front of us, looking as indifferent as if the entire heavens were as placid as the narrowing space above us.

"Did mamma send you to fetch me?" queried Elsie impatiently, and eyeing contemptuously the restless pony. Cooney turned his little pink eyes, laughing and blinking upon her for a moment, and then began to gather his mouth up and bending forward, until his round shoulders were yet rounder, he emitted a screech in most perfect imitation of the owl that takes its name from that peculiar cry, and immediately followed this by another in imitation of the "hoot owl."

But Elsie had not been reared in the woods to be frightened by owls. She pushed her speckled sunbonnet back, and her bright eyes flashed as she said, in scorn:

"Do you think I'm afraid of owls?"

Cooney immediately began to do his mouth up in a different but still indescribable fashion, and then appearing to draw his head into his body as a turtle will, he sent forth a long, wailing scream, so much like that of the catamount, that the dog accompanying him cowered and whined. Elsie was not a little shaken by this, but affecting not to be, cried angrily:



"I can't ride behind on that sheep! Why didn't you bring a horse?" And pushing past the pony, started swiftly along the path. I followed. Otto had gone on, but was walking slowly.

Cooney finding Elsie disinclined to ride the pony, tried to persuade her.

"Yeth, Elthie," he began, in his imperfect speech, "yer mammy senth me to feth 'e. Tum, honey, and gith up ahin' on 'e pony." But Elsie only walked the faster, and Cooney gave up persuasion and rode on ahead, entertaining us sometimes by singing like a bird and again by wild cries like quadrupeds, for there was neither bird nor beast that the strange, half-witted fellow could not imitate.

But now the clouds had reached the zenith, and in five minutes deep darkness had fallen on the earth, hiding every object save when now and again the lightning flashed for a moment, to be followed by a still more appalling gloom. Otto had rejoined us and was leading the way silently, followed closely by Elsie and she as closely by me. And then began to fall great, scattering drops of rain, to be followed in another minute by a perfect torrent, mingled with flash after flash of blinding lightning, and bolt upon bolt of deafening thunder. We were in a dense, unbroken forest, in one of those beating rainstorms that fall at the autumnal equinox.

"Don't be frightened, Elsie, dear; Otto and I will take care of you," I said, bravely, as I pressed to her side and took her hand in mine.

"I'm not frightened, Felix," she answered in accents low, but brave and unshaken as my own.

At that moment a flash of lightning discovered a familiar great, hollow poplar, with a door-like opening in it.

"Let us take shelter here till the worst is over," suggested Otto, leading the way in. We followed and were completely sheltered from both wind and rain. It must have been quite an hour before the rain abated and a very dim light began to invade the forest. Elsie urged that we go forward, which we did, unwisely



enough, Otto still leading. But we had not gone far before it appeared to me and to Elsie too, though neither spoke of it at once, that we were out of our home-bound path, and bearing too much to the south-east, and in the direction of Otto's home.

By the dim light nothing looked familiar, and I was growing desperate, when Elsie, in the same suppressed tones in which she had spoken since the darkness fell, but loud enough for Otto to hear, said: "Felix, we are on the wrong path. We are not going toward home."

Before I could speak, Otto answered: "Yes, we are off our path," and stopped, shortly.

"Let us go back to the hollow tree and take a new start," I suggested. Elsie agreed, but Otto was silent for a moment, then answered very earnestly:

"I think I know where we are. If so, there is a well beaten path not a hundred yards from here which will lead us to the 'big road.' Now you stay here while I go find the path, when I will halloo and you can come to me. If I fail, I'll come back and we'll return to the hollow tree and wait till the moon rises."

This appeared reasonable, and we agreed, and he started. But while I kept up for a half hour a constant hallooing, we could hear no response from him, and reluctantly concluded that he had deliberately abandoned us.

We undertook to return to the tree, determined to remain there till morning, but we wandered wide of our way, and at the end of an hour or more found ourselves entering what was known as the "Hurricane," an area of many hundred acres of uprooted forest, grown up in thicket, and more than three miles from our homes. I had often been there with my elders, hunting game, but we were so completely turned about now as to be unable to agree which way home lay, Elsie maintaining that it was in one direction, I that it was in another. We could do nothing therefore but seek out a shelter, for it was still raining, but more gently, and await the moon, or if that should not serve, the morning. We huddled close together under the trunk of a fallen tree; but Elsie, heated from the long walk and wet



to the skin from the rain, was soon shivering with cold, at which I was sore distressed and bestirred myself to mend matters. The blue grass growing luxuriantly there, had fallen and lay like winnowed hay. I gathered great quantities and made a bed or covering sufficient to protect her from the wind, now sprung up, and adding to our discomfort. Though the grass was wet, it served very well indeed, and I began to urge Elsie to try to sleep, promising myself to remain awake and keep guard. She had at length yielded and had disposed herself as comfortably as she might, when suddenly the night was rent by a scream that would have shaken the nerves of a practiced woodsman, and the like of which had caused men, armed and knowing their way, to draw closer to each other in this same "hurricane." It was the cry of a catamount, not a quarter of a mile away, and, as it appeared to us in the very direction we had come. Instantly we were on our feet, Elsie clinging to me and shaking from head to foot. Nor was she more frightened than I, for I knew that the catamount, while not apt to attack, was, when it did, as deadly as the panther. Remembering to have heard that beasts of prey would not assail the human species unless they could spring upon their victim, I cast about for some way of escape. Near us stood a sapling, grown up after the tornado had swept the forest. I knew that ordinarily, Elsie could climb, for had we not scaled many a tree together? But I doubted her ability, now.

"Elsie," I began, after bracing myself to speak bravely, "Elsie, if we could climb that sapling there, we should be in no danger from the wildcat."

"Why, Felix, dear, I can climb," she whispered, totally unconscious of the tender word she had used.

I led her to the tree and, still doubting, helped her as far as I could reach, and she was soon up among the branches, which, though frail, sufficed to sustain her weight. I followed, and we were soon out of danger, though our positions were painful enough. We had scarcely disposed ourselves, Elsie some feet above me, when the blood-freezing scream arose again, not two hundred yards away.



"It's following us!" whispered Elsie.

Twenty yards away was a naked knoll, dimly visible. In a moment Elsie whispered:

"Look, Felix! Yonder it is."

And as she ended, the scream arose again, long and hideous, and ending in a sort of wail. And then it stopped, for it was on the knoll, and sat down after the manner of the domesticated feline. From our elevation, we heard that wailing scream many times echoed and re-echoed. And then presently, and apparently far away, it may have been one mile—it may have been three, we heard an answering scream. Our enemy heard it, too, for it started forward and passed our tree without taking the slightest notice of our presence.

"It was not following *us*, after all," said Elsie, aloud. But still we kept for a time our uneasy positions, hearing ever and anon the screams of our enemy and the answering cry of the other cat; the one growing more distant and the other, nearer.

Just as we were about to descend, Elsie, sniffing the air, said:

"Felix, I smell smoke. I have smelt it ever since I climbed up here," and she bent her gaze toward the knoll. Presently she went on in a whisper, again:

"I can see the smoke. It's just beyond the knoll. O, if there *is* fire there, wont we be glad?"

Descending, we made our way to the knoll, and sure enough, just beyond was a great, fallen poplar, the hollow whereof was all aglow. I had soon gathered a sufficiency of dead grass to make a comfortable bed, and having brought fagots, had directly a brightly blazing fire. But just as we had settled down, and was engaged in drying the grass for Elsie to lie on, we were thrilled, frozen, for again there arose upon the air the scream of a wildcat, followed immediately by that of another. Neither of us spoke, but Elsie drew very close to me, and if I did not hear her brave little heart beating, it was my own I heard.

While we knew that as long as the fire was burning, we were in no danger from the hateful beasts, yet we were startled and fearful, and kept a sharp lookout,



peering into the darkness. Presently Elsie, clutching my arm, whispered, hoarsely: "Look, Felix!"

Following the direction of her gaze I saw at the point where the light contended with the darkness the forms of the two beasts, moving stealthily along with their sides toward us, but still observing us furtively; for we could see their eyes like balls of fire, glaring at us.

I have never been able to understand the reason of it, but the moment I saw those glaring eyes, I was seized not with fear, but with a savage, reckless daring. If the jungles of India had poured all their lurking denizens into the wilderness at that moment, and they had set to screaming, growling and roaring in chorus, it might have increased my rage, but I do not believe that it would have inspired in me the slightest fear. Elsie instantly discovered my frenzy and watched my movements with a scared face. I think she suspected that I was about to make some desperate move, for as I started toward the brightly burning fire, she laid her hand on my arm, saying in a whisper, "Please don't, Felix!"

But nothing could have staid me. I seized some blazing brands and, with a scream which Elsie always maintained was more terrible than that of the catamount itself, I dashed madly at the beasts and in a moment was at the very point where we had just now seen their glaring eyes. I think that for the moment I wanted them to attack me. But they turned tail instead, and went crashing through the thicket. They must have been frightened, indeed, for they usually move, even when running at great speed, noiselessly. Reaching the edge of the thicket, I threw the blazing brands high in the air, in the direction of the enemy, following them with another scream, the echoes of which sounded unearthly. I returned to Elsie feeling no fear that our foes would return. Whatever else might befall, I was sure that those two cats would give our camp a wide berth.

Yielding to my entreaties, Elsie lay down and was soon asleep, but before doing so, she came to me and, laying her hand on my arm, said, anxiously:



"Promise me, Felix, that if the wildcats come again, you will not follow them into the thicket."

I promised readily enough, for now my fit over, I should have been as frightened as herself at their return.

She had been long sleeping, when I put more fuel on and then lay down near her on the bed of grass. Not to sleep; I would rest and keep watch, I said to myself. But gradually that heaviness which comes to the eyelids of tired childhood, and closes them, but which often refuses to come to those of the weary and heavy-laden man, after middle life, stole over mine and wrapt me in dreamless sleep. Once only, as afterward I remembered, I had the sensation as of a weight upon my chest, but it was only momentary, for I continued sleeping.

The sharp report of a rifle not far away, awoke me just as Elsie, awakened by the same sound, lifted her head off my breast; for, sometime during our slumbers she had changed her pillow.

The sun had long since risen. As I arose to a sitting posture, Elsie started with a suppressed cry. Following the direction of her eyes, I saw some fifty feet away, the dark face of Otto Castelar, his chin resting upon his hands as they lay upon the fallen trunk of a tree. He was eyeing us furtively. But when he saw that he was discovered, he arose and without saying a word, went away. Whether he had been since leaving us, to his home, not half a mile away, or had followed us in our wanderings, we never knew. He never returned to the school again; nor did he and I ever after, during his stay in the neighborhood, meet on friendly footing.

The experiences of this night, borne so bravely, considering our ages, by my little companion and myself, had the effect to knit our hearts in still closer bonds, though little did we dream that an enemy who was to be as relentless as death and pitiless as the grave, had endeavored to strike his first blow.



## CHAPTER III.

## DEATH OF ELSIE'S FATHER. ELSIE GOES AWAY.

In the winter following the events just recorded, Elsie's father died, leaving a large family in comparative poverty. And soon it was rumored that Elsie, now thirteen years old, was to be carried away to a city in a distant part of the State, to be adopted into the family of a maternal uncle, who had recently been bereft of two daughters—his only children, one of whom had been of the same age, and had borne the same name as Elsie. He and his wife had already taken a niece of the latter to rear and educate, and the uncle now besought the family of my little friend to surrender to him, her custody. He was possessed of large wealth, and urged upon Elsie's afflicted mother, that the scheme would relieve her and greatly comfort him and ultimately redound to the well-being of the child, as it was his purpose to make the two nieces his heirs. It was a hard trial for the mother to give up her baby, for such Elsie was.

If she consulted her heart only it cried out against it. If she took into the account the interest of her child, she felt constrained to accede to the earnest entreaty of the uncle. With many misgivings and heartaches, the struggle ended in my earliest playmate and sweetest friend being borne away.

Long afterward my mother told me that Mrs. Craddock had been influenced not a little in her decision, by the behavior of Otto Castelar. She had discovered in that hot-blooded youth a fierce attachment for this child. His conduct had, within the last few months, amounted to a persecution of Elsie. This behavior of the young Spaniard—for such he was regarded, notwithstanding his known paternity—had been so strange and the moods of the youth, so varied and singular, as to be well calculated to arrest the attention and excite the alarm of even a less thoughtful mother. As for Elsie herself, she detested the lad and lived in constant dread of him;



which fact appeared to be known to him, and to have had the effect to intensify rather than cool, his passion.

A few days before Elsie's departure and while preparations for that sad event were in progress, accompanied by my mother, who loved my little friend almost as her own child, I went to take leave of her. Elsie was greatly cast down at the thought of leaving her home and going so far away, as it seemed to her, and was, indeed; for in those days, a journey of a hundred miles was more distant and irksome, than would be one of a thousand now. At length, and when the evening was drawing nightward, we strolled out to a woodland, where many a time we had played and gathered nuts. We talked much of her going, and cried a little, enough to keep each other in heart when we should look back to the parting—and I had pledged my word, which she knew I would keep, that when I grew older, and not much older either, I would come to her in the distant city—and we had turned our footsteps homeward again, when I saw not far from us, in the deep shadow of the forest, the barrel of a gun, projecting above the trunk of a fallen tree. A little closer observation discovered the dark face of young Castelar, his elbow resting on the log, his chin resting in his open palm, while he stealthily watched us.

Though conscious that I saw him, for I had turned about, facing him, he remained as immovable as if his head had been, instead, a knot on the fallen tree. Furious with rage, I walked straight up to him, being careful to get in reach of his gun and nearer to it than he was, and in a voice shaken by passion, I demanded an explanation of his conduct. With the utmost coolness he lifted his head, but without rising, and looked me steadily in the face. And then the strange mist passed over his eyes, shutting in every sign of emotion or passion, as he said, as simply as if it had been the very truth:

“I have been hunting squirrels.”

“Otto Castelar, you lie! You have been lurking in these woods all day. You are here to spy upon us,” I cried in my wrath.



There was a momentary dash of blood in his bronze face, as I hurled at him the epithet; but he simply moved toward his gun. I laid hold of it. He stopped, and said quietly:

"Give me my gun!"

And then, instantly, for the first time, there came into his manner an appearance of embarrassment and into his voice a tone of indignant astonishment, mingled, I thought, with a shade of contempt as he said:

"Why, do you think I would use my gun?"

"Yes," I said, "a fellow who lurks to spy upon people will do worse!"

"I am not a fellow," he answered, "but if you distrust me you can discharge the gun."

Not deigning to do this, I handed it to him, and turning my back upon him, took Elsie's hand and led her away.

In a voice tremulous with emotion, he said in low but distinct accents, as we walked on:

"Miss Elsie, will you not say even so much as good-bye, to me?"

Half in fear, half in pity, Elsie turned about, saying softly, but not looking at him:

"Good-bye, Mr. Otto."

---

## CHAPTER IV.

DEATH OF FELIX'S FATHER. DEPARTURE OF THE  
MYSTERIOUS FAMILY. FELIX TAKES LEAVE OF  
HIS MOTHER.

Time had flown, as it fleeth ever, suffering no boy to remain such. A period of six years has gone by since that summer evening, on which I had taken leave of Elsie. These years were filled with such commonplace events as befall the struggling poor, engaged in the hard task of subduing a wilderness. Such incidents only as were calculated to give color to the web of our story, will be mentioned in these memoirs.



About two years after Elsie's departure, and on an occasion, when following a long absence, McAlpin was visiting his family, an officer of the United States, with a *posse*, and bearing a writ, it was said, from the Federal Court in Tennessee, made a descent upon our peaceful and law-abiding neighborhood. It soon transpired that the arrest of McAlpin, on some grave charge, but what was never known, was the object of this visit. But getting wind of the officer's approach, he sought cover in the dense thickets of the "Hurricane." And the emissary of the law was obliged to return without his prisoner. Nor was McAlpin ever seen in the neighborhood after. And some months later the mysterious "William" appeared and carried the family away, my enemy, Otto Castelar, with the rest.

When I was seventeen, my father generously sent me to school—a college it was called—at our country town. None of the elder children of our household, for, like Elsie, I was the baby of the family, had enjoyed other advantages for an education, than those afforded in the log schoolhouse, under the tutorage of the old master already mentioned. But I had heard from time to time, through the kindness of her mother, who had visited her once and constantly received letters from both her and the uncle, of Elsie's progress and of how she was reckoned the brightest and most promising pupil, in the famous school for girls, of which the city of Terra Alta, where she resided, boasted. And this made me chafe the more, under the rather hopeless limitations which met me at every turn. My mother saw this and I have never doubted, pleaded my cause with my father, with such effect that he overwhelmed me one evening, by announcing his willingness to send me away to school.

I went with a heart full of joy and gratitude, and teeming with thoughts of Elsie, in the distant city. But my career in college, though full of promise, was short-lived. For in the next spring, in the midst of the first year, my father died. And thus it came to pass that the name "Felix Munro" stands in one single annual catalogue of the college; and in that, under the legend, "Preparatory Department."



And now, at nineteen, I must go, and indifferently equipped as I felt myself, with my nonage against me, as nonage in those days was, more than now, and seek employment as a teacher. For while my father had by such toil as wore his life out before he had reached fifty-two years, acquired a goodly estate in land, still it would not more than suffice to employ my elder brothers, none of whom thought of other vocation in life than that to which we had all been bred. I had helped through with the summer's work, and now I must speak to mother. I had chosen not to add to her other sorrows the contemplation of my leaving her. I would not speak of my purpose till the last. Having read that "a prophet is not without honor save in his own country," I had determined to seek my fortune among strangers.

One evening as we sat under the spreading branches of the great old apple tree, where in my babyhood I had played at her feet, and where in later years I had been accustomed to sit and read to her at evening tide, I said:

"Mammy, the harvest is over and the remaining work does not need my hands—" But somehow, I could not go on, though I needed not to say more; for after a moment, my mother having sighed deeply, but with a voice steadier than my own had proved, said:

"Yes, Felix, I know. You must leave me."

"But how did you know it, mother? I have never mentioned my purpose to a living soul!" I cried, astonished.

"O, I have known it all summer, child. I have known it from the way you would at times look at me," she answered, quietly. And it was true. Unconsciously, I had betrayed to her mother-eye and heart, all that was in my mind and which I was all the while supposing was such a secret. It was well; it saved me a painful task.

"I know that this way of life is not suited to you, my son; nor you to it. I have known this all along—ever since you were a little boy—a baby, I might say." And her voice faltered a little now. But she went on:



"It's better so. Where do you think of going?"

I mentioned the place, in a distant part of the State. A former college friend had interested himself in my behalf, and I was assured of employment. After looking thoughtfully at me for a moment, she asked: "Is that nearer the city of Terra Alta?"

"Many miles nearer, I am happy to say," I answered.

"You will most likely go to see your Elsie before you come back to your mother?" she said.

"*My* Elsie, mammy?" I cried, a little abashed, yet not a little vain at the thought.

"Yes, *your* Elsie, Felix; heart and soul yours, unless she has changed since going to the great city. And it's not like her family to change. The Cradocks are a steadfast people," she said softly.

"No, no; she'll not change!" I cried, in my excitement at the mere suggestion, not thinking what I said.

She laughed quietly at my enthusiasm, but only said: "They do change sometimes, my son."

And so they do.

In a few days I was ready to take my leave. My mother accompanied me to the gate, where, kissing her good-bye, I bent my steps northward along the great road, carrying in a small carpet bag all my material earthly possessions. But the hopes that swelled my heart and the courage that buoyed my spirits were too great to have been contained in many carpet bags.

As I turned to go, my mother said: "Remember your father's integrity and courage, my son!" And then, in a moment she added: "Not that I distrust you, Felix."

Every few paces I looked back. She was still gazing after me. Many, many years have flown, some on swift and some on lagging pinions, since that day; yet, plainly as then I can see that blessed face as it watched my retreating form. At length I had reached a curve in the road, beyond which, the gate, mother and home would be no longer visible. I turned for the last time. But her head was bowed, her face was in her hands, as they rested on top of the little gate.

For a moment my courage faltered; for a moment I



felt as if I must go back and take my mother in my arms and say: "You are dearer than ambition; dearer than my hopes. I have come back to stay with you." But behind this, was the consciousness that more than half her pride and hope in me, arose from her faith in my fortitude and courage.

More than an hundred miles of unknown road lay between me and my destination, for I was going to one of the northernmost counties of the State; and the reader, by a glance at the map of his country will see, that the Hoosier commonwealth is uncommonly long from south to north.

---

## CHAPTER V.

### FELIX ARRIVES AT TERRA ALTA, AND WHAT BEFELL.

Another year has fled; a year which at its beginning, I should gladly have seen omitted from the tide of time and have leaped the chasm at a single bound, so longingly had I looked forward to—the reader knows what event. During this year, at the beginning of which I had taken leave of mother, I had taught some, wrought with my hands on the farm some, and read not a little law, and to some purpose, I may say. And now, on a sunny evening in September, I am drawing near the city—Elsie's city—along the winding banks of what, to my untraveled eyes, seemed a great river. In the same carpet bag that the reader saw a year ago, and carried on a stick across my shoulder, are again all my worldly possessions, except a remnant of money earnings in my pocket, and which though in coin, adds little to the burden of this journey, made like the other, on foot. I reflected now, with no little pride, that among my effects in the carpet bag, was a well-fitting suit of brown tweed, made by the sole tailor of the village near which I had taught and wrought.



The dust along the river road was deep, and stirred by much travel, mingled with the Indian Summer mist, now lifted in air, causing the sun in the western sky to appear as a great red wheel, hanging on invisible axles, while the distant spires and steeples arose in dim outline, like specter arms, piercing the sky. As I beheld these and the smoke in the hazy distance, rising lazily from a thousand chimneys, and hovering above the city, I was possessed by a sense of awe.

The reader will recall that the largest town I had seen hitherto, was our frontier county seat, a village of five hundred souls. For in my journey a year ago, I had, conscious of my homespun and humble appearance, been foolish enough to take a somewhat longer road to avoid passing through the capital of the State, which lay in my direct route.

And now I am drawing near to the great city, with its twelve thousand people. And Elsie is one of this teeming multitude; the thought of it! Elsie, whom I have not seen for more than seven years!

Suddenly I begin to meet at short intervals, buggies and carriages, and in these, twos and fours of gay and laughing young people; and dressed! I had been troubled with small weakness for fine clothes, but had, as what rural lad has not, imagined urban apparel; but in the wildest flight of fancy, I had never conceived anything comparable to what I now saw at every turn. The only pictures, even, of fine apparel, I had seen, ever, were those in the family Bible, of some of the patriarchs, and of an angel or two on a visit to one of them, —Abraham, I believe, on an occasion. And these all appeared to have been clad in purple and fine linen, worn loose. There was nothing in these long, loose garments by which to gauge my imagination, so as to take in the close fitting coats and trousers; the low-cut vests, the glossy shirt-fronts and the quaint and handsome hats which I now beheld. For the patriarchs and angels did not, according to our family Bible, wear shirts, nor indeed trousers; and as for hats, skull caps were the style of the times, and few appeared able to afford these.



I quickly saw that my poor little brown suit of tweed, which I had thought so smart, would dull, in the presence of such outfits, into an obscurity, from which nothing, not even a handsome wearer, could rescue them; and I *was* esteemed a comely youth, and think it no shame as an old man, now, to say that that esteem was well grounded. Another fact I discovered, which to have known a year ago, would have saved me going several miles out of my way, to avoid passing through the capital, namely: that these happy young folks passed me by without so much as looking at me; indeed, I do not think that they saw me at all. I soon learned that a travel-stained youth might pass along every street in that city, and so long as he forebore treading on people's toes, not attract the slightest attention.

When I first began to meet these young people, my heart gave a great leap and appeared to be trying to get up into my throat. "What if Elsie should be among them?" I had asked myself. And I began to think of cutting across lots to avoid her seeing me. "Why?" I don't know. But if those whom I had already met took such small heed of me, why should she observe me? For in outward aspect, I was no longer the Felix whom she had known. She had known a slight, thirteen year-old lad, of fair face, like a girl. The Felix Munro, walking with such tired air along the dusty road, was a stout, manly looking fellow of twenty years, with full, sun-browned face, large hands and feet, and wearing a moustache, which, aided by accumulated dust, made no small show under his aforetime pug, but now, comely Grecian, nose. Besides, the hair on the head of that Felix was light in color and cropped short; while that on the head of this dusty traveler was quite dark and had been suffered to grow until it hung about his shoulders.

But I had reached the suburbs, when suddenly there arose on the still evening air, apparently fifty yards away, a perfect babel of sounds. Yells of laughter, mingled with oaths; words of command, braying, and I know not what. I had not outgrown my boyish curi-



osity—and for that matter have not yet—so I bent my steps toward the source of the tumult. I found such a motley group of youths, from my own age down to ten years, as I had never before seen the like of. In the center was a tall, lank figure, apparently six feet in height, not badly but oddly dressed. He had been riding an "Indian pony," but had dismounted or been unhorsed, by the mob. As I neared the scene, one larger than the rest and appearing to be leader and master of ceremonies, cried:

"Now, d—n you, bray!"

And the uncouth figure began, while the motley crowd about him held their hands, palms forward against the sides of their heads and waved them in chorus, in perfect time with the braying. This performance ended, the master of ceremonies commanded the figure to flap his wings and crow. He obeyed, apparently without protest, his persecutors flapping their wings in chorus again. The next command was difficult of execution, and the fellow demurred.

"Where *have* I heard that voice before?" I asked myself, on hearing him speak. I drew near, until I was mingling with the crowd.

"Git down; down with ye!" commanded again the master of ceremonies.

"Now, boys, lemme go; 'e cows'll get 'way," whimpered the fellow. At this the leader turned toward three or four of the largest of the rabble and in well affected tones of authority, commanded:

"Do your duty, men!" Whereupon they seized the tall figure and threw him to his hands and knees. As they did so, the slouch hat worn well down over the fellow's face was knocked off, enabling me to see his countenance, when to my amazement, I discovered that it was "Cooney" Redwine, the former *protege* of Elsie's father, and the devoted slave of Elsie, herself.

A thousand memories crowded into my mind, and all at once I found something very like affection for this uncouth and half silly fellow springing up in my heart. I knew why, and on whose account, Cooney had made his way to the city. I determined to rescue



him, but to do so if possible by moral suasion; means which, having used on rural lads, I thought far more effective than I found it, when I came to invoke its aid in dealing with city miscreants. But before I could carry this benevolent purpose into effect, one of the assailants gave Cooney such a brutal kick as threw him onto his face, wounding it till the blood streamed from it. I have always possessed the infirmity of a quick and violent temper. Indeed, with a little encouragement, I should, no doubt, have been quite a savage. At sight of the effect of this cowardly act, I sprang to Cooney's side and flourishing my stick, cried: "Stand back and leave this poor fellow alone, you cowardly devils!"

They stood back for the moment. But as I turned to lead Cooney, stunned and bleeding, toward his pony of which one of the mob had taken possession and was now astride, they surrounded me and set up such a braying, waving their ears in chorus again, as would be incredible to one not acquainted with city hoodlums.

Still I was managing my temper fairly, until the master of ceremonies came up in front of me and with an impudence and an expression of countenance that would have provoked a saint, made such outcry, waving his "ears" meantime, as completely upset my self-control. And I presently gave him such a blow with my stick across the side of the head as put an end to his asinine performance, and stretched him on the ground as if dead.

As ill luck would have it, at this moment a policeman made his appearance and proceeded with the usual shrewd discrimination of his kind, to arrest me, *only*.

Thus it came to pass that after all my roseate anticipations, I made my advent into the city of Terra Alta in the custody of an officer, and followed by a motley mob of hooting miscreants, and was committed to the station house, where on a slate the faithful guardian of the peace made this entry: "Unknown." (I had refused to give my name.) "Assault and battery with intent to kill."

It was now dark, and here I was in the prison of a



strange city. I was told by the officer that I might put up twenty-five dollars as surety, and go till morning. But having seen the entry on the slate, I answered with no little spirit and indignation (I did not have so much money): "What! you charge me with a felony and then offer to turn me out for that sum? You want to rob me! You shall not do it! I demand that you go to Colonel Townshend and tell him that a son of an old friend is in prison, guilty of no offence."

The officer appeared to hesitate, but at length said: "I can do nothing for you unless you give me your name."

"You'll learn my name to your sorrow before you're done with this business!" I cried.

My manner and speech took effect; for I heard him mutter: "I guess I'll do it, as he appears to be a pretty brisk young 'un." And I could not guess to whom he addressed this speech, unless to his Satanic majesty, whose imp I was quite ready to believe him. Seeing him about to start, it occurred to me to send a note to the Colonel; which I did, as follows:

"COLONEL TOWNSHEND:—The young man who wrote you some months ago, asking leave to become a student of law in your office, has been arrested and is now in the prison of your city, though guilty of nothing of which he or his friends need be ashamed. Will you come to see him at once?"

The good man came, and after greeting me warmly and hearing my story, turned upon the officer, saying, sharply: "Were you aware of the facts before you arrested this young gentleman?" throwing some emphasis on the last word. The officer admitted that I had stated the facts correctly.

"And yet, you have 'slated' him as a felon?" cried the lawyer with flashing eyes. And he proceeded with a good deal of vigor to expunge the entry from the slate.

I was released on the word of my new-found friend, who urged me to become his guest. But this I declined, not however without feeling deeply moved by his generous behavior.



Colonel Townshend, at this time in the prime of life, had years before lived in our part of the State, and had been our representative in Congress, my father having been his steadfast friend. I had during the last year remembered that he was now a resident of Terra Alta, and had written informing him who I was, and asking the privilege of pursuing my studies with him. He had answered warmly, inviting me to come on ; an act of generosity which I am vain enough to believe, he never regretted.

---

## CHAPTER VI.

### A LAWN PARTY.

I found a modest boarding house and resolved to enter at once upon my studies. But I must see Elsie first. She was ignorant of my arrival. For while the incident just recorded was served up the next morning in the daily paper, I was spoken of simply as a stranger, who chanced to be passing through the city. Nor was my behavior blamed, but rather commended. I know not if my generous friend was in any wise responsible for this.

Had I on any other account wished to learn the place of abode of Mr. Hugh Downs, Elsie's uncle, I should have asked any one I chanced to meet for the information. But I shrank from making any inquiry, just as if anybody would at once know my secret, if I ventured to do so.

I tried by several stratagems to compass the information, but they all proved unavailing. At length, with no little trepidation, I ventured to make the necessary inquiries of Colonel Townshend, feeling the while that I was betraying the secret which I had so carefully guarded through all the years. I was almost frightened at learning that Mr. Downs' home was the splendid place, almost princely as it appeared to me,



that in my strolls about the city I had so much admired, and which stood, as I had already learned, in the most pretentious part of the city.

"How am I to summon sufficient heart to go to that grand house?" I asked myself, again and again. On the second evening, however, I did, after twice turning back when within two squares of the place, pluck up sufficient courage to go on. Not that I had any thought of stopping. I would, I said, walk past in the hope that perchance I might get a glimpse of Elsie, for I was sure I should know her among a thousand. How my heart beat, as I approached the beautiful grounds, comprising quite a square!

As I drew near I heard many voices mingling with happy laughter. And when I came to a point at which I could look past an angle of the great house, there arose upon my vision a scene surpassing in brilliancy anything I had ever imagined of Fairy Land. More than two score quaintly, but gaily dressed boys and girls, but called here, "young ladies and gentlemen," were assembled in the midst of a scene of fountains, flowers and shrubs. Yonder a group sang to the accompaniment of a stringed instrument, while here in the foreground strolled arm in arm others, the murmur of whose voices added to the charm of the music of the singers.

My heart almost stood still at the thought which possessed me. How could I hope for a place among these? And above all, how expect that in the midst of such associations and scenes Elsie yet carried in her heart and mind any thought of me. If any recollection of what now, more than ever, appeared to me the happy past, remained, it was surely no more than a childish reminiscence, to be laughed at. Slowly I walked past, furtively scanning each visible face in the vain hope of finding that one I had seen in an hundred visions of the night, and in a thousand daydreams. For year after year I had imagined accessories of beauty and maturity in the bright, sweet face I had known; so, keeping pace with nature in her perfect work of growth and development.



I walked on and on, until I had left the city. The full-orbed moon was lighting up the landscape and touching the distant domes and steeples, when I turned about. The night was a perfect one—warm as summer. When in sight of the grounds again I saw that the company still lingered, and that they were engaged in some outdoor game in which balls were used. This was quite new to me. I had many a time played the decidedly masculine game of "Town ball," and the like. But the delicate and fragile girls of this happy company would have been as safe in the battle of Waterloo at two P. M. of that bloody day, as in the hardy sports to which I was used. But here was a game of ball in which the girls were actually participating; and with much apparent zest, for their glad voices, in speech and laughter, rang out on the soft night air. I slackened my pace and began to listen with keenest interest at the sound of each voice, hoping to hear hers. For surely I should not fail to detect its lightest accent. But I listened and looked in vain.

In front of the grounds in the deep shadows of a spreading maple, I stopped. While almost invisible myself, I could see every movement of the players. And as I began to reduce the moving throng to some order, I observed standing apart and not engaged in the active sports, two forms in white. And soon my gaze becomes fixed upon one of these. This figure, beautiful and motionless as a draped statue of Parian marble, was tall—too tall, methought—lithe and graceful, with a world of brown hair falling down upon a fleece-like shawl which covered her shoulders. But I could not see the face; and if the figure conversed, it was in tones so low as to be inaudible, where I stood. But while my gaze is fixed intently upon the statue-like form, a player suddenly, improvidently hurls a ball high in the air and it falls not far from where I stand, and rolls over the carpet-like lawn to within ten feet of me. The two figures turn and spring quickly forward to capture it. As they fly toward me the companion figure throws a hand back to impede the swift movement of the other, pressing closely upon her, when clear



and distinct the voice of the other cries: "There; that's not fair play!"

I staggered back and leaned against the tree; it was the voice of Elsie; though in her face, imperfectly seen, there was little trace of the Elsie of old.

The companion reached the truant ball, stooped, lifted it, and was flying back toward the players with her prize, leaving Elsie, who, finding herself beaten, had slackened her pace and was slowly turning about.

In certain exigencies, one never knows why one does a thing; one simply does it without stopping to analyze the method or the motive of it.

While almost gasping for breath, and when the figure had turned about and was moving away, I uttered in a tone I should not have recognized as my own, the name—"Elsie."

As a fawn upon its native hill when it suddenly hears the bay of the hound, stops in midstep with uplifted foot, so stayed this retreating figure now.

More than a quarter of a century has passed, and the vista is dim in many places; and on either side of the way are graves and mounds, and monuments, not a few, but that figure at the distant end, standing with hands clasped in front of it, the body slightly bent forward as if in the act of uplifting the foot, which rests upon the toe; the head turned half about, in the attitude of listening, so that the profile is clearly visible, as motionless as if cut in fadeless marble, it had stood so for ages—this shall never grow dim until the impenetrable veil shall fall, which closes forever the avenues of mortal memory.

"Speak again, Felix, speak!" was my speechless cry.

"Ah, fool, coward, she is gone!" I said, chiding myself. For swiftly the figure had moved on.

I saw Elsie rejoin her companion, and hand in hand they walked apart from the rest, and I could see that they conversed earnestly and was sure that they were speaking of what Elsie had heard, for they ever and anon bent their gaze toward where I stood in the shadow.



I felt as powerless to move as I had been to speak again. I could see that the two were nervous and fearful, for they continued to move about and peer into the shadow as they drew nearer and nearer. Now they are within ten feet of me. They pause and look eagerly (but ready to fly) straight at me. I essayed to move forward into the light, but was powerless. For the moment I despised myself. And now they slowly turn from me, and are about to return to their companions, when my coward tongue again pronounced, in the same strange tone as before, the name, "Elsie."

They fled like startled birds, nor stopped until they were in the midst of the players. I saw that I must, if I would not be discovered, move on. I did so swiftly, keeping well within the shadows of the trees.

That night in my dreams I pursued a phantom figure in white, that to me was Elsie, but to whom, try as I might, I could not be Felix. And then in the vain pursuit, I found that I had been lured into tangled thickets which I was unable to penetrate, but through which the phantom in white glided unhindered. And then, from near where the figure had stopped, and as if listening, stood, there arose the scream of a catamount—for lo! we were in the forest again. And I saw the beast upreared; and its face had the seeming of the face of Otto Castelar and it barred my way to the figure. And while I struggled painfully onward, I heard, suddenly, the angry roar of approaching waters, that in a moment more gathered on their swelling flood the phantom form and bore it from my sight, while there arose above the roar of the waters, piteous cries of despair. And in perplexity and terror, I awoke.

So much had I been affected by these scenes, waking and sleeping, that when the next morning I met my preceptor, he exclaimed: "Why, Felix, are you ill?"



## CHAPTER VII.

## BIDDEN TO TEA. MEETING OF OLD FRIENDS.

I was not ill, but try as I might, Blackstone, never interesting to the beginner, though I believe still persistently placed by preceptors in his hand, was this day "all Greek."

About noon there came in a reporter for a morning paper, to whom my preceptor introduced me, and unwittingly I underwent my first "interview," an incident not worthy to have been recorded, but for what followed.

In the next issue of the paper appeared this paragraph :

"Colonel Townshend has taken into his office a young gentleman, a Mr. Munro, the son of an old-time friend; and it transpires that this young gentleman is the stranger committed to our prison some evenings since, for administering a richly merited chastisement to a young ruffian, found abusing an eccentric fellow who lives with Mr. Downs. By the way, we heard quite an interesting story in this connection. This fellow who goes by the odd name of 'Cooney,' and who is not esteemed overly bright, was reared in the family of Miss Cradock, Mr. Downs' niece. Some years since, as many will remember, Miss C. came here to live with her uncle. It is said that 'Cooney,' who had been devotedly attached to the girl from her infancy, grieved so at her absence that he finally, in the hope of finding her, wandered away from home, and was never heard of more, until when about a year ago he appeared at the house of Mr. Downs and inquired for 'Elsie,' as he called the young lady. Miss Cradock recognized him as her old-time friend and protector. And the poor fellow was so overjoyed at seeing her, that he could scarcely be restrained from taking her in his arms."

In the forenoon of the day on which this paragraph appeared, a well dressed, rather stout and most benevolent looking, elderly gentleman walked into the office, and after shaking hands with the Colonel, turned about and looked curiously at me, his great, kindly eyes fairly beaming, observing which, my preceptor said :

"Mr. Downs, let me introduce my young friend and pupil, Mr. Munro."

Kindly as was the conduct of the visitor, I had never in my life been so put out on being introduced



to a man. My behavior was so remarkable as to surprise and vex Colonel Townshend. But Mr. Downs appeared to take no notice of it, though he must have seen my confusion. He came toward me, exclaiming:

"Ah, and this is Felix Munro, the playmate and school-fellow of my niece, Elsie; if, indeed, we have not here a case of mistaken identity—eh, Mr. Munro?"

I managed to assert my self-control, and to answer fairly well: "Yes, Mr. Downs, I have the honor to have been both the playmate and school-fellow, in our childhood, of your niece, Miss Cradock."

"Good! Splendid!" he cried. "She was sure it was you, and wouldn't let me rest till I should come along and see." And then turning to my preceptor, who by this time understood my conduct of just now, he went on: "Ah, Colonel, you have a rare boy here—leastwise my niece thinks so! She tells some capital stories of your joint adventures," he continued, turning again on me, meantime retaining his hold of my hand. "I reckon you have not forgotten your night in the woods? Elsie hasn't, I can assure you. I heard her recount it all to some young people the other evening. Why, Colonel, it's as good as a novel, and all true! Lost in the thickets of the uprooted forest, all night; catamounts and all that! O, it's a rare, good story!"

By this time I had regained my composure, so far as my introduction to him had disturbed it. But the words he had uttered; these sent the blood trembling through my heart and dashing through my veins and arteries, till the ends of my fingers tingled! *Elsie had not forgotten me!* That was certain. A much duller youth would have gathered that from the hearty words of the visitor. And I felt very much as if I could embrace him, then and there.

Looking about the office, he cried:

"Where's your hat? Get your hat and come with me! Elsie did not tell me to fetch you, but that's what she meant, and what she'd like!"

I began to make excuses. I urged that I was not in proper plight for a visit to the ladies of his household. And while I averred that Elsie was not half so



anxious to see her old playfellow as I was to see mine, still I begged to postpone the visit until evening, as a fitter time.

"That's no doubt right," he broke in. "That's what Elsie said. She said, 'Bid him to tea, uncle! Bid him to tea, this very evening.'"

And now, I wished I had made no excuse, but had gone at once, so put out was I at the bare idea of joining the family at tea. But seeing no polite way out, I accepted the invitation, and the good man took his leave.

It would be vain to attempt to describe my emotions during the next few hours. For the first time in my life I was discontented with my apparel, in which, I suppose, I displayed a common weakness.

As the evening drew on, I repaired to my lodgings and arrayed myself with care, in my brown tweed. I am sure the illustrious Mr. Titmouse could scarcely have been more painstaking than I was on this occasion. And the large mirror in the parlor of the boarding house, at which I glanced, reflected an image that even in my anxious state, was not entirely unpleasing. I had inferred from a remark of my preceptor, after the departure of Mr. Downs that that gentleman's wife, whom he had married in the South, was a devotee to fashion and society. As the old-time friend of Elsie, I was anxious to give her no cause of mortification, and this intelligence added not a little to my trepidation. But at the time appointed, and I was to come early, I started. As I neared the place, I saw coming up the street, meeting me, an open barouche, with a coachman on the box, and two ladies within. Now I should at that period, have been quite unable to describe the magnificent costumes of these latter, and in essaying it, I draw upon the wisdom of later years and so shall no doubt omit some of the finer and less palpable points. The youngest of the two, was *petite*, almost child-like in figure, and wore a gleaming yellow satin dress, trimmed with black thread lace, open at the throat, and elbow sleeves. The neck was encircled by a gold chain, to which hanging pendant, were numerous opals of goodly



size. She wore a corsage bouquet of roses; on her arms were bracelets and bangles, and, as I discovered later, her fingers were encircled with several rings, set with rare gems. She wore a black lace bonnet and carried a parasol of like material, lined with crimson. Her face bore evidences of unusual refinement and, shone upon by the reflected crimson light, was singularly beautiful. I saw, as they drew nearer, for my attention was riveted to the verge of rudeness, two eyes, dark, large and luminous, in which there was a dreamy look of perfect content. Her complexion was olive and colorless, save the lips, which wore the crimson of perfect youthful health.

Of the elder, nothing need be said, except that if a score of years had been lifted from her face and form, and her costume had been the same as that described, she would have been the perfect image of the younger.

Just as I had reached the hither edge of the grounds in the midst of which stood the palatial dwelling of Elsie's uncle, and was, as I supposed, about to meet and be passed by the carriage, it turned and drove up the avenue, toward the house; for the ladies were none other than Elsie's aunt and foster cousin, Miss Hortense Parte. I instinctively realized this, and it well nigh paralyzed me.

I was about to turn back, when I beheld another form which had the effect to instantly change my inclination; the form of another young lady, much taller than the inmate of the carriage. She was playing with a beautiful St. Bernard dog of great size. The apparel of this girl was as simple and plain as that of the other was elaborate and gorgeous. She wore a dress of pure white, and about her waist a sash of broad blue ribbon. Her luxuriant golden-brown hair fell freely about her graceful shoulders and down to the ribbon of blue that encircled her waist. In her hand she held a riding whip, by the simple motions of which she directed the movements of the great beast, that seemed to understand the slightest gesture of his mistress.

I have reached the walk leading up to the house, and must turn in or pass on, and at the moment I am seized



with such a sense of embarrassment as nearly drives me on—and away. But I master it, and with almost trembling steps, turn toward the house. The girl and her playfellow are well up the walk, neither having as yet observed my presence. I think that at that moment it would have been a relief if the dog had attacked me. But I was within less than twenty feet of the two, before he saw me. He stopped playing, moved toward me, uttering a deep, angry growl, just as his mistress, looking up, discovered my approach.

“Down, Bruin, down!” she cried, springing between the dog and myself, and evincing alarm. The animal obeyed reluctantly, and the girl turned toward me.

“Is this the residence of Mr. Downs?” I asked, haltingly, not knowing what else to say.

“Yes, sir,” in clear and simple accents, she answered; and then there arose in her face a look of questioning uncertainty.

“Have I the honor to address Miss Cradock?” I questioned, lifting my hat. For a brief moment she stood with the questioning expression in her eyes, then bounding forward with an air as confident as if we had parted but yesterday, cried:

“O, Felix, and is it indeed you?” And this exclamation was so hearty and soulful, and there was such a look of honest gladness in her upturned face that in a moment I had forgotten that there was anybody but just our two happy selves, in all the bright world.

With both her own she seized my extended hand and so looked up into my face, that without stopping to weigh nice questions of propriety—nor did I for the matter of that know how to weigh them—I bent forward and imprinted upon her lips, a kiss as honest and true as ever saluted the lips of maiden; and to this the sweet girl returned a like salutation. And then she led me up the broad walk and into the house, while all the time she was plying me with a hundred questions, scarcely taking time to answer the few which by some dexterity I was able to interpose. We were alone in the great drawing room for many minutes. And now, I could sit and gaze at her with none but herself to wit-



ness the aspect of my countenance ; while I did so with my heart so full of happiness, that I was sure I should never desire other employment.

And when I came to look at her, how like and yet how unlike the Elsie of other days. The same glorious hair, only more luxuriant, and a mere suspicion of waves that I did not remember. The same brow, neither lofty nor low, and of peerless purity ; only now it bore signs of much added culture. The same great, dark-blue eyes, only these shone with an added depth and luster, of incomparable serenity. The straight nose, the nostrils whereof dilated and fell responsive to the slightest emotion of her heart. The arched brows, as perfect in outline as if formed by an artist's pencil. The pure sweet mouth, and chin of such graceful contour, that mouth and chin had attracted attention and admiration when she was a little girl. And now I sat gazing at them, feeling amazed that what was always so perfect could have grown so much more beautiful. Unlike that of her foster cousin, her face was fair, and tinged with the hue of perfect health. Her throat had the seeming of pure, white velvet.

And as I looked on all this perfection, I said in my heart, "And this is she, whom my mother called *my* Elsie, and of whose family she has said : 'The Cradocks are a steadfast people.'"

But now we hear approaching along the corridor, quick but heavy steps, and in a moment more Elsie's uncle walks in.

"Ah, Felix—for I must call you so—I can't 'Mister' you, I am glad to have you in my house !" he cried. "I was in the library," he continued, "and saw you arrive. It's a great pleasure to see friends meet after years of separation."

Elsie and I exchanged quick glances, she laughing softly, but evincing little confusion, while I was conscious that my face was scarlet, of which the generous uncle appeared to take no notice, but went on to say :

"By the way, your old friend Conrad," for such was Cooney's real name, "whom you served so good a turn the other evening, is crazy to see you. He con-



stantly blames himself for not recognizing you. But he makes excuses that he was so put out by the ruffians, that he would not have known Elsie. He was saying this morning that he might have known that there was no other young gentleman in the world that would 'a fit that 'er way fur pore Cooney.' "

And as the good man went on, he continued to walk back and forth, rubbing his hands and looking from one to the other with a pleased expression of countenance.

Elsie had left the room and returned, bringing the ungainly but smartly dressed Cooney. He broke out, blubbering and laughing at once. His speech was so imperfect, that, used as I had been to it in my childhood, I could scarcely understand a word he said. He was sure that I must be offended that he had not recognized me. I reassured him, in doing which, I called him "Conrad." He broke in, more vehemently than ever :

"Doan, Muster Felix ; doan call 'e 'at ; call 'e jest Cooney, please ; to'ther sounds so distant like, and 'en 'e's nobody but jest pore Cooney, no 'ow, 'cept Muster Downzez's 'orsteler an' heps Muss Elsie mount 'er 'orss w'en se rides a 'orseback."

I consoled him, calling him "Cooney," and he ambled out, crying and laughing by turns.

In another moment Mrs. Downs and her niece enter, the aunt leading the way. The sensation produced by her appearance was one of amazement, that so diminutive a person could be so stately. She bore herself as a "princess of the blood" might. It was, I thought, the poise of her very pretty and shapely head, that wrought this effect. While perfectly polite toward me, her speech being in most cordial phrase, there was in it all, such a reserve as seemed to say : "From this elevation I condescend to salute and welcome the friend of my husband's niece." She was still a beautiful woman, younger by many years than her husband, who was a bachelor of forty and had achieved a fortune as a trader to the South country, when he married this pretty Creole-French girl.

The niece, Hortense, was much more cordial,



though I fancied that there was an air of conscious superiority, as if she were patronizing me. While in the presence of Elsie and her uncle, only, I had felt that restraint which, oddly enough, such circumstances and state of the affections beget. But now, the patronizing airs of the other ladies had the effect to put me on my mettle, and presently my tongue was loosed and equipped with ready and apt speech; and I had the satisfaction of seeing a look of triumph in Elsie's eyes, and I was sure that the face of my generous host wore a gratified smile.

When we had reached the spacious dining room, Mr. Downs, standing at the head of the table, pointed to the place on his right: "Sit here, Mr. Munro," he said, "Sit here on my right; and you here on my left, Elsie, that you may look into each other's faces, for, from the way Felix looks at you, child, I don't think he's quite sure that he has found the right girl—eh, Felix?" And away my blood rushed into my face, again.

"Don't be embarrassed at what uncle says; he forgets that he was ever young and diffident himself; if, indeed, he ever was the latter," suggested Hortense, good naturedly, but rather enjoying, I thought, my confusion.

"You are very considerate, Miss Parte," I answered, "but I know that this arrangement, so agreeable, to me at least, is but another proof of his kindness and good will."

"Good will!" cried my host. "Good will! Why, boy, you will never know, I hope, how a childless old man yearns to take to his heart every boy and girl, with clean and intelligent faces, he sees!" and his eyes filled with tears. "Besides," he went on presently, "you are something better than a mere stranger. Why, for these six or seven years, I have heard you spoken of almost every week by Elsie here, and by her mother, too, when she was with us; and always as Elsie's friend and playmate, and on more than one occasion her fellow-adventurer; and what's better still, always as a good boy, Felix, a good and generous boy!"



There was an almost solemn quiet during the rest or the repast. The occasion had stirred in the heart of the uncle, memories of his own children, whose untimely deaths he never ceased to mourn.

Supper over, my host and myself, at his suggestion, repaired to the library, that he might indulge in a cigar. I knew not if this had other design. But certain it is, that we were soon followed by Elsie. Nor did we quit the comfortable apartment until I took my leave two hours later.

"Come here as freely as you would to the house of your nearest kinsman," were the words of my host, as he held my hand at parting.

---

## CHAPTER VIII.

UNDER THE ROBIN'S TREE. "O, FELIX, HOW CAN YOU ASK, AFTER ALL THESE YEARS?"

It was early November, when Elsie and I had already fallen into the habit of taking as often as each alternate evening, a stroll along the beautiful street on which she lived and which ended at a woodland. This field of forest had from an early day been the property of her uncle, who had religiously left untouched, its great, primitive trees. He had not, as yet, formally dedicated it to the city's uses, but the public had access to and the unhindered use of it, except that no firearms were allowed within its inclosure. In consequence of this restriction, squirrels, rabbits, and birds of every song and plumage found in a land where winter holds sway four months of the year, abounded; and were tame and fearless. Elsie was sure that the same family of robins had builded their nest in the one angle of the limbs of the same tree, each year of her sojourn in Terra Alta. And sure, too, she was, that she knew the "old folks" of this family. These she had named in honor of two friends of her childhood, "Moses" and "Annie." On



our first visit thither, a month ago, she had said, as the birds flitted about their home-tree near us: "Mr. Moses, Mrs. Annie, this is my old friend, Felix Munro. Don't be afraid; he, too, loves robins." And so I did.

The innocent pair hopped about, looking so wise and understanding that I wondered in fancy if, indeed, they might have gotten some notion of the meaning of Elsie's words.

In these last days there had been something in Elsie's air and manner I could not understand, but which none the less disturbed me. I had noted that her embarrassment, if indeed, it was that, was greater when she was in the presence of her aunt and Hortense. Already morbid from too close application to my studies and to the work which my preceptor had generously furnished me to do, this behavior of Elsie threw me into a sort of spasm of desperation. I determined to speak of the matter now, this very day.

"Elsie," I began, and my voice was so low and earnest that the girl looked quickly up at me, while her face was overspread with an expression of embarrassment, and she clasped her hands in startled expectancy. "Elsie, pray, what is it that annoys you so?"

After some hesitation, during which the whole aspect of her face changed, she answered:

"Why, Felix, why do you ask? What have I done? Tell me, please."

"Why, Elsie," I cried, "you have done nothing to make you look like that. I only meant that you should understand that I know something, somebody—what shall I say?" And I found myself floundering wofully. And then in sheer desperation: "I know! I know what it means: you have been persecuted, because of your—*friendship* for me. They make sport of me, and plague you on my account! I know!" I said, falling into the homely phrase I had been used to. She started slightly, and eagerly asked:

"Why, Felix, how did you know?"

I was filled with indignation.

"It is brutal!" I cried. "I am poor, true; rustic, too, no doubt, in the eyes of these fine ladies. But it is con-



temptible in them to persecute you—confound them!”

“Please don’t, Felix!” she said. And then after a moment she went on in a tone of rebuke, the color mounting to her face: “Don’t look that way. Why, if you only had the firebrand you would look as wicked as you did that night when you pursued the catamounts into the thickets. Come, sit down. Please do not be angry. That distresses me most of all.”

I was ashamed now, and obeyed so far as to sit down.

“Catamounts! Catamounts!” I cried; “only I may not fight them as I did those in the forest. It is brutal in them!” I repeated; for I was wounded in my very heart at the thought that Elsie had been, as I supposed, subjected to ridicule, on my account.

“No, no, Felix,” Elsie presently answered. “You do not understand. It is not at all as you imagine. They do not behave as the people we knew, would. O, if it were brutal, as you have said, it would be less annoying. One can defy brutality, or even rudeness. If they spoke of you broadly, or treated you rudely, or put you in open question in any way, as impolite people do, I should appeal to my uncle. But no, they call you Mr. Munro; they speak of your comeliness; marvel at the progress you have made, in your circumstances, but—I know not how to make you understand.”

“O, I’m not so stupid!” I cried, a little nettled; at which Elsie was hurt, seeing which I was ashamed of myself, and went on more gently: “O yes, I do understand, Elsie. I am too rustic, too plain, too poor. My visits to your uncle’s house shame these fine, but silly ladies. If I wore fine apparel, possessed wealth, or perchance belonged to one of the everlasting ‘old families’ we hear so much about, that ‘saw the Indians and wintered in the fort,’ then if I should get drunk once a week as some of these do, your stately little aunt would approve me as I have seen her approve such with smiles and welcomes, and with the highest seat in her synagogue. O yes, I understand!”

“Yes, you appear to understand,” Elsie answered, simply, but in a moment added, “Only, pray do not



think my aunt and her niece *silly*. I assure you they are not that."

A little on the reader will see now two foolish children, the one a spirited but totally inexperienced boy, the other a proud and sensitive girl, managed to magnify a molehill, until in their eyes, it had all the seeming of a mountain. But the trouble, for the moment, was real and serious. So when we arose to go, Elsie was silent and thoughtful, while my mind and heart were in a tumult of contending thoughts and emotions.

Very slowly we walked under the low, spreading branches of the maples, and as sometimes I had done in our childhood, I had stolen her hand and held it, clasped in mine, and somehow the tumult in my mind and heart had subsided, to be succeeded by another, quite different; and I fell to talking in a voice so unlike that of just now, that Elsie looked into my face with an expression of glad surprise.

We had stopped and I now held both her hands and was saying: "O Elsie, darling, I am always blundering. Here, I have been giving you more pain than *they* possibly could. What need we care for what they may say or do, if—O, Elsie, mine, if you will love me just a little bit! I do not ask you to love me as I love you, but if you will love me just a little, what need we care for what these vain women—for what the whole world may say or do? Do you care for me? *Do you love me just a little?*"

In a voice tremulous with emotion, she answered softly: "O Felix, how can you ask, after all these years?"

"O, you will be my sweetheart, then, forever and ever," I cried, as I held her in my bosom.

"*Forever and forever!*" she whispered, turning her sweet face toward mine.

Slowly we walked on, and we were very, very happy on that November evening in the long ago.

As we neared the great mansion that stood outlined against the yellow sky, so that with its many angles and gables, I fancied it looked like a feudal castle, we saw the family carriage turn into the grounds, and



within, the stately little aunt and her niece on one seat, while on the other, talking and gesticulating, sat the uncle.

Ah, little did they dream of the great sea of happiness within the heart beneath the brown jacket of the approaching rustic, or of the gentler but more precious love, filling the bosom of the rustic's companion.

We were silent. (Need I to have said this?)

There are times when speech is mockery, and falls on the ear

“Like sweet bells jangled out of tune, and harsh.”

But now the uncle sees us; the aunt and Hortense, had as we knew, observed us some time ago. He calls to the coachman: “Hold, Jonas! Drive up the front way and let the ladies out there. Here, Elsie, Felix; come up to the end of the drive and wait a moment.” The ladies alighted, and in a moment more the carriage was flying toward us.

“Here Elsie, you and Felix get in,” cried the uncle as he reached us. As we obeyed, he went on: “You will let an old man bear you company. You see your aunt just now picked me up on my way home, so I’ve had no ride to speak of. And here’s Felix—it’s precious little riding he indulges, with his studies and his copying.” And the venerable man looked at me so compassionately, that Elsie’s face was all aglow with happy sympathy, and I thought there were tears in her glorious eyes, as I thanked him with faltering voice, for his generous words had touched me keenly. But he did not let us dwell on these.

“I heard something very pleasing, to-day,” he went on. “Col. Townshend says that already Felix is of more account to him in causes, than half of his paid associates. What do you think of that, niece, mine? And he says, (and here the good man slapped his knee violently) ‘that he is going to bring him to the bar right away.’ You know the Colonel is a Virginian, and he uses the old phrases, which sound large enough in his mouth. I assure you.”

“Why, uncle Hugh, Felix is not twenty-one yet,”



suggested Elsie, blushing. "How can Col. Townshend bring him to the bar, as he calls it? You must be of age, mustn't you, Felix?"

"O," I cried, blushing too, I think, "Colonel Townshend is not in earnest. He simply wished to say something kindly. He is the most generous man in the world, excepting your uncle."

"Ah, Felix," answered the uncle, solemnly, "you shame an old man. I have not been generous according to my ability. I have not served my generation half as I ought." And after this there was silence for a space. As for Elsie and myself, we were sitting side by side, and that was enough. But I saw at length that our companion, while not appearing to, was eyeing us, from time to time, closely. After awhile he said, in a tone of subdued tenderness: "I am glad to see you looking so happy, my dears." Elsie blushed again. As for myself, I have always had an infirmity for blushing. It was for many years a source of daily annoyance. Try as I might, I could not overcome it; so, at length I gave up the struggle, concluding that so long as I had any red blood I must be content to have my face flame up, on every slight occasion. Not that I was annoyed now, for inexperienced as I was, I felt sure that it was proper enough to blush at this speech. I managed to say that I would be ungrateful indeed, if I were not happy in such company and encouraged by such kindly words.

"Well, as to the company, yes," he answered drily.

When, on reaching the avenue leading up to the house, I left the carriage, Mr. Downs said, "Remember, boy, you could not be more welcome at the house of your mother, than at this. Come as often as you will."

The next morning my preceptor informed me, speaking of it as if it had happened an hundred times before, that it had been arranged that I should appear with him in the defence of a young man who had slain the betrayer of his sister. I should not have been quite so badly put out at the intelligence that I was myself to be instead, put on trial for murder.



"Why, Col. Townshend," I stammered, "why—really—I cannot think of doing so preposterous a thing. I shall become the laughing stock of the court, bar and people, if I appear in such a cause! Surely you cannot be serious."

"Remember, you are to appear with *me*, as my junior. Who knows you are not of age? Whose business but the court's, is it? And he is willing to waive it. O yes, you'll appear. The client is to be brought here directly, for consultation. You will have three weeks for preparation. I shall expect you to make the first argument."

I saw that he was in earnest. I must peremptorily decline, and so, as I feared, offend him, or do as he suggested. I thought of Elsie; I thought of my poverty and obscurity. It really seemed impossible to worst matters; so, said I, "I shall do the best I can, if you command it. I cannot disobey your wishes after all you have done for me."

"Very well; I *command* it," was the answer.

With every detail of the case I familiarized myself. The client—"our client," Colonel Townshend was careful to call him—had shot down in the street the destroyer of his sister. No youth in the city had a fairer name. He was poor, while the slain man was the son of "an old and wealthy family;" and though the accused had many friends, the family of the deceased had more, and the prosecution was to be conducted by two of the ablest criminal lawyers in the State—men whose names are yet familiar in the annals of the commonwealth.

So wrought upon was I by my labors and at the bare contemplation of appearing in so great a cause, that it was well for me that no more than three weeks were to elapse before the trial. Day after day I laid before my senior the result of my researches and reflections, and night after night went over it again in my dreams. And then I would arise to address the jury, and it would seem that my heart would stop and I would be unable to utter a word. And in chagrin and humiliation I would awake, bathed in perspiration, and my brain on fire.



At length I grew morbid. I began to contemplate the event as involving my inevitable discomfiture. Again I begged my preceptor not to bring me forward, and believe, though later he denied it, that he would have yielded, having grown distrustful, but for the circumstance that it had been published that I was to appear, and the Colonel had so praised to bar and bench my preparation—my brief—that he was compelled to admit if he were inclined to do so, he could not excuse me now. This increased my trepidation, and filled me with yet more gloomy apprehensions.

It was but three days till that fixed for the trial, when I bent my steps toward the home of Elsie, whom I had not visited for more than a week. I was told at the door that she was in the library, whither I hastened unannounced, hoping thus to avoid contact with the other ladies of the household. Elsie was reading aloud to her uncle, a duty she often performed at evening.

I was far down the great room before my presence was discovered. The expression that arose in Elsie's face amazed me. She faltered out, "O Felix, you are ill! I was sure of it! I told uncle yesterday that you were surely ill. Why, you look ready to fall!" I affected a boisterous laugh; but it did not deceive her. Indeed, she looked more than ever alarmed.

"Indeed, indeed, I am not ill," I said, going up to her and taking her hand in mine. Still she shook her head doubtingly, as we sat down side by side. Meantime, the uncle having put his spectacles on, drew near looking inquiringly into my face.

"Ah, Colonel Townshend told me you were working too diligently in that case, and that you had grown a little nervous," was what the good man said.

"Is it that? Oh, Felix, is it that which makes you look so?" Elsie questioned, anxiously. I was obliged to admit the truth, when she went on: "I have been so anxious that I have scarcely slept; and the trial is to come on Monday?" And presently, after looking into my face with an expression of yearning tenderness, and taking my hand in both her own she said, in accents which I sometimes fancy I can still recall: "Why,



Felix, you look as if you were going to a trial for your own life, rather than to plead for the life of another. This must be dreadful business. Why, it will wear your life out of you in a year, at this rate."

"O, I shall soon grow accustomed to it," I answered, lightly. "I am foolishly nervous. It is all wrong any way. I ought never to have yielded to Colonel Townshend's wish. I am too young and not sufficiently equipped for such a performance." And then, I added in tones so low that Elsie alone heard: "But having consented to do so, it is indeed, little less than a trial for my life. O, Elsie, darling, if I fail, I can never look you in the face again! Not so much because of failure, but rather that I was foolish enough to essay such a task at my age and with my inexperience, and so run the risk of humiliating you and your kind uncle, and of making myself ridiculous. But," I added, aloud, "I cannot draw back now."

"No, no, you cannot, you must not. That I fear would be worse than failure." Elsie said this while looking appealingly at her uncle, for whose opinions she had a reverence equal to her love for his person.

"No, Mr. Munro must go forward," he responded. And I did not like his "Mistering" me. I fancied that he was displeased, and now I came to think of it, I could but wonder that I had ever consented to take such a step without his advice. "O, if I do fail!" I cried in my heart. For the case was attracting wide attention; not only in the city, but in all the country about, and a knowledge of my failure would be widespread.

I mustered courage at length to say: "Mr. Downs, I should have advised with you, but the matter was sprung so suddenly, and Colonel Townshend was so urgent, that really, I had no time for reflection."

He seemed to apprehend what was in my mind and hastened to answer: "Don't think of that for a moment, child. It would not have made the slightest difference. I should have told you to follow the advice of your preceptor. You have done right. Colonel Townshend is not likely to have made any mistake.



He is more than ever confident that you will acquit yourself handsomely. He is a little anxious about your nervousness, but says the friction of the trial will have worn that off before you 'come to the jury'—as he expresses it. But," the good man added presently, "if you will allow me to advise you now, I have a suggestion."

"O, sir," I cried, eagerly, "pray what is it? What would you have me do?"

"Not a very easy thing in your frame of mind, I imagine," he answered. "I would have you dismiss all thought of this case for the next two days. Come to us to-morrow; Elsie and I are alone, her aunt and Hortense are away for a week. We will dine together, and if the weather is like this, we will drive to the country."

My heart gave a great bound at the words, "Elsie and I are alone." All at once the aspect of things changed. The prospect of two days with Elsie was enough to cure a much worse case of "blues" than had ever afflicted me, with my buoyant spirits; though I had from childhood been subject to the disorder. Nor was Elsie indifferent. Her eyes shone with a light that transfigured her sweet face, which had before worn a look of anxiety. I laughed an honest laugh now. "O," I exclaimed with warmth, "if all physicians prescribed such medicines, what a pleasure to be sick!" And the uncle was scarcely less delighted.

When I took my leave of Elsie at the door, and heard the sweet accents of her voice, in the words: "Good-night; God bless you, darling," the earth and the skies and all things animate and inanimate had put on their beautiful garments, and I had really forgotten my poor client and his cause.



## BOOK II.

---

### CHAPTER IX.

#### THE TRIAL. FELIX AS AN ADVOCATE.

The day had come. The court room was crowded with lawyers, witnesses and curious spectators. The venerable parents of the slain man, with their solemn faces, sat with the prosecution. The defendant, with serious aspect, was seated by the side of his champion, Colonel Townshend, and by him sat the ruined sister, with a face of great beauty, but sadder than that of the Magdalene, while on her knee she held a babe, which all said was the image of the slain despoiler. Behind this group, in easy communication with my senior, I was, as far as I could, hiding from the gaze of the multitude, who looked as multitudes do, ever at the accused. Doubtless it was thus curiously they gazed at the Prince of Peace, while He was scourged, and crowned of thorns.

Of all the waiting throng, I am sure I was the most nervously anxious. I envied the coolness of the prisoner, even. I think, at that moment, I would gladly have accepted the most obscure and painful career, and entered myself apprentice to it, to escape this now imminent ordeal. I tried to recall my mother's admonition, "Remember your father's integrity and courage, my son," but my heart would sink within me. I endeavored to call up the image of Elsie, hoping for inspiration thence, but still my nerves quivered and my pulses throbbed, and my face burned, while my hands were as cold as the hands of the dead.



"This was egotism," you say, "supreme self-consciousness." I saw once a bullock drawn by the horns to the post of death, and in the agony of his apprehension all his flesh quivered. He was an egotist, no more nor less than I at that moment.

Now the panel file slowly into the box and a mist passes before my eyes, and they seemed "men as trees walking." I gasped for breath. I could endure the agony no longer. I arose and left the court room. I walked rapidly down to the river and stooping, bathed my face and throbbing temples.

"This is awful!" I cried. "My preceptor had better have killed me outright. What shall I do? If I fly, I am undone; if I remain, I shall inevitably fail, and so render myself ridiculous."

"Remember your father's integrity and courage, my son," again my mother said—her voice as distinct as on that day, when she said it across the little gate, as I turned to leave her. Instantly a feeling of calmness began to steal over my senses. "Is this reaction?" I queried. "Shall I fall into a stupor?" I began to feel an indifference, like one who, having taken a narcotic potion, hears the fire bells, but turns over and sleeps on.

In this state, I walked calmly back and into the court room. My senior looked at me keenly; at first with an expression of anxiety, but on seeing my changed aspect, a pleased smile took the place of the anxious look, as he said, "I wish your opinion of the jury." I looked at the "twelve" with the air of a veteran. They were unknown to me; but I saw a face I did not like. I said so. "Capital!" whispered my senior. "I had already determined to challenge him; he will not do." And turning about, he excused the juror. Another took his place; both sides were content, and the panel was sworn.

The first witness takes the stand. His evidence is brief and unimportant; the cross examination but a single question. The second and third are like the first.

But now the name of one is called, known to be hostile. He was in company with the deceased at the time of



the nomicide, and had sworn fiercely against the prisoner at the inquest. Having actively espoused the cause of the prosecution, he had talked much upon the streets and had, as I had found, made many contradictory statements. Questions involving these, a score or more, I had prepared with care. His evidence in chief ran smoothly and strongly against the prisoner. He was a full hour in delivering it, and at the end was triumphantly turned over for cross examination. Under the adroit questioning of Colonel Townshend, the fellow was driven to modify and weaken point after point of his evidence in chief. And now the cross-examiner has reached the point where the impeaching questions must be propounded. I had them in orderly array, ready to pass to my associate, as needed, when he turned to me saying: "Mr. Munro, you have this matter at your fingers' ends; will you conduct the further examination of this witness?" This morning the suggestion would have filled me with dismay. It startled me now, but I saw in the face of my senior a look of undoubting confidence; I took no time to reflect.

"As you please, Colonel," I said. He turned about and explained to the court. The other side made no objection. Indeed, they were glad enough to have me do it, rather than my experienced senior, who had already shaken the witness. I proceeded with question after question. Such interrogatories must disclose the persons to whom the contradictory statements have been made. Among these were some of the best men in the city. The false statements related to the conduct and declarations of the prisoner. As the questions disclosed that he had been caught in his crime, the witness became panic-stricken. At first he evaded and equivocated, but I continued to push him. Then he grew impertinent. I bore this good-naturedly. At length he evinced a disposition to argue each question instead of answering it, and ended in quarreling with the judge and getting fined for contempt.

As the witness left the stand, I chanced to look past the bench, at a row of seats elevated above the rest, and set apart for elderly men and persons of distinction,



when I discovered the benignant face of Elsie's uncle, all aglow with admiration and pleasure, as it might have been at the triumph of his own son.

As I walked toward my lodgings this evening, I felt amazed at the revolution the day's work had wrought in my courage and self-confidence. I understood now what my preceptor had meant by the "friction of the trial." He was right. At this rate I should be quite at home before reaching the jury.

It is the fourth day of the trial. The prosecuting attorney has concluded the opening argument for the State. He has made a savage, almost brutal speech, demanding the life of the prisoner, who, much worn, sat with white face, his great, brown liquid eyes wearing that expression seen in the eyes of a hunted animal. His aspect was most piteous as he sat meek and patient, while malediction and denunciation poured from the glib and reckless tongue of the prosecutor.

"He that sheddeth man's blood, by man shall *his* blood be shed," concluded the State's attorney, with great vehemence.

If I had thought of myself and of what I was about to essay and hazard, at this moment, I should have sunk under the weight of it all. If I had paused to look at the curious and expectant crowd of spectators now watching me, my courage would inevitably have failed. But none of these things disturbed me. I was thinking only of the cruel and wicked perversion of the evidence by the prosecutor; and of the ruined sister and the brother, who had so terribly, but righteously avenged that ruin.

In such frame, I arose and stepped quickly toward the desk in front of the jury. My senior came toward me, with a look of mingled pride and misgiving. For the briefest space this reminded me of myself, but at the same moment I saw the eyes of my client lifted toward my face, with such look of entreaty as turned my mind and heart to him and his cause.

Colonel Townshend whispered: "It is but a half hour till the noon recess. The court will rise now if



you wish ; would you rather he should, or will you go on now ?”

“ Now, now, now !” I cried ; and pushing almost rudely past him, I began my address.

I really remember little more. It was 2 o'clock when I ended, a fact entirely incredible to me, so insensible had I been to the flight of time. The indulgent old judge had allowed me to go on, without interruption for recess. I was equally insensible to the effect my advocacy had produced upon the audience, except the jury ; and I cared little for the rest. But when I had sat down and looked about, I discovered that every face I saw bore signs of emotion. The tears were still on the cheeks of many, and it appeared that everybody had had recent need of his handkerchief. And I could see in the thousand eyes bent upon me such looks as were well calculated to gladden my heart, now that I thought of myself—of Elsie—of mother. And just then a hand was passed over my shoulder, from behind, and began patting and caressing me. And on looking up, I saw the face of my generous senior, bending over me, his eyes suffused with tears. I took the hand and pressed it gently, and he knew that I understood.

At sight of this there was a slight rumbling, moved like a wave through the room.

Mr. Downs had remained throughout the trial. It would have been difficult to say which was gladdest at my triumph, he or Colonel Townshend. The speech of “ the student ” was the talk of the town. The newspapers took the matter in hand, and it really looked as if my fortune was made.

Modesty would forbid my reproducing here any part of the argument made on behalf of my client, even if I could recall it, which I cannot, to the extent of so much as a single sentence. But a reporter for the press did take down parts of it that were afterward published. And since there was occasion to make some observations on the subject of *eyes*, as indicative of character, and as that topic has been already introduced, and must be further dealt with in the course of these memoirs, it may not be amiss to set down here what I said on that



occasion, as containing what I've found to be the true philosophy in respect of the eye as an index of character.

Following is what I said, together with the remarks of the editor, introducing the matter :

“ We reproduce, in addition to what we have heretofore published, some observations made by young Munro, in his arguments the other day on the subject of *eyes*. The prosecutor had charged that the prisoner had a murderous eye, and appealed to the jury to observe the defendant's eyes. Now, it so happened that the eyes of the prisoner are remarkable in several particulars, no one of which in the judgment of observers sustains the assertion of the prosecutor. When Mr. Munro, in the course of his argument, came to that part of the prosecutor's speech, he said :

“ “ The prosecutor has had the bad taste and worse judgment to make *profert* of my client's eyes, and has appealed to you to find him guilty on the evidence of them.

“ “ He has a murderous eye ! ” cries the prosecutor.

“ “ I can easily imagine a case, in which, were I charged with the defence of a prisoner, such an appeal would fill me with alarm. For, gentlemen, you and I *believe* what the prosecutor only *affects* to believe, that the eyes are not only the windows of the soul, as the poet has said, but the unfailing index to the heart and mind, in short, to the character. For the quality of the eye, if in a healthy state, is fixed by the character of the intellect. The dome above is the source, whence eyes of beauty, of gentleness, of intelligence receive their life and nurture. If this dome is depressed, and meagerly supplied, the eye may glisten, but it can never sparkle ; it may glare, but it shines without beauty ; it may flash, but it never laughs or speaks. Ah, this superincumbent dome is the seat of universal beauty as of universal empire. All that distinguishes man from the beast mounts the throne, which God in the beginning set up here. Here abide forever, the kings and queens of the humanities. Benevolence, Love, Courage, Fortitude, Hope and Faith are of this royal family, empurpled and bearing scepters ; and speaking, all, through the eye. Depress—extinguish—this dome, and all eyes are but the eyes of serpents and beasts of prey. Thenceforth there will be dens, but no homes ; reproduction, but no families ; huts, but no houses ; dug-outs, but no ships shall plow the main again ; there will be robbery, but no commerce ; wars, but no parliaments.

“ “ Verily, our eyes do forever bear witness. Hoodwink your nearest friend and his unmarked face shall be strange to you ; extinguish all the rest, and the eye and brow shall be unmistakable.”

“ The application of these suggestions to his client's eyes is said to have been masterly.”

On the day following the completion of the trial, Mr. Downs came bustling into the office, seized me by the hand and stood unable to speak a single word ; his ascent of the stairs, and his emotions having deprived him of the powers of speech. But he bore down upon me with his great, kindly eyes in a way that touched me, keenly.



"I am obliged to you, Mr. Downs," I said, "for the interest you have taken in this matter, on my account. I shall never forget it, and hope to be able in some way, sometime, to repay it all."

"Repay it!" he gasped. "Repay me for the greatest happiness I have enjoyed in all my life. Oh, no, Felix; I am the debtor! Why, I have been walking on the clouds, for three days!"

And having regained, somewhat, his breath, he went on, less laboriously, still holding my hand and looking into my face, while tears suffused his eyes:

"But if *I* have been walking on the clouds, I know somebody who has been surveying the stellar system. She has been as far as Sirius, I am sure. My old ship carries too much ballast for such a voyage, or I should have gone along; as it was, I got above the clouds, I assure you."

"Please come down to earth again, Mr. Downs," I said, "I can't get along without you and Elsie, and I have to confess that I do not feel very airy just now. I suppose I am foolish, ungrateful, and all that."

He stood looking at me in amazement; but seemed suddenly to understand.

"Reaction!" he exclaimed. "Very natural; very natural! Strange I did not think of that sooner." And then uttering the single word "Come," he seized my hat and clapping it on my head, led me down to his carriage. He simply motioned me to get in. I obeyed, and he followed.

"Drive home, Jonas!" he commanded, and in a few minutes we were at the mansion. Elsie met us in the corridor and was as speechless as her uncle had been. But I kissed and caressed her until she at length found her tongue. But not before she had cried a little; which I have always noted does not render a woman uncomely, if perfectly happy while about it; and Elsie was perfectly happy now, for she said so in such low, sweet accents—her face close to mine—that I never doubted. It was then I learned that in any but the mortal stages of the distemper, a low, sweet voice, uttering certain magical words, will quickly cure the *blues*.



Mr. Downs had considerably passed on, leaving Elsie and myself alone. But now, salutations ended, Elsie led the way into the parlor. I found myself confronted by Mrs. Downs and Hortense, and was just about to feel put out and half indignant, when I discovered that the manner of these ladies toward me was entirely changed. Not that they had ever in the slightest degree been impolite. On the contrary, they had been *too* polite. But now their greetings were heartily cordial. True, the aunt was cordial from a great height, and was as stately as ever, but she was genuinely hearty. As for the niece, she took my hand and held it while she looked me in the face with her soft, black eyes, and in gentlest accents congratulated me on my triumph, thanking me in the name of all womankind for what I had said, as she had seen it published. Really, at the moment I thought, as I looked into her face, that if Elsie were not, she would be the most beautiful and fascinating creature out of the skies. As it was, with Elsie standing there and looking on, her face filled with a great happiness, I think the movement of my already bounding blood was accelerated by this voice and face. Nor did Hortense stop at this, but leading me to a seat sat down beside me, at the same time motioning Elsie to sit on the other side. Thus seated between two such perfect creatures, with the stately aunt and the eccentric uncle looking on, the reader who has observed my former trepidation, will suppose me greatly embarrassed; but you are mistaken, my friend. A week ago such a situation would have rendered me helpless. But when one has achieved, in the estimation of the world—his world—a triumph and is being lionized, he suddenly finds himself inspired by a self-possession, a sense of *peerage*, of which but yesterday he had not dreamed.

When an hour later dinner was announced, and I led the young ladies to the table, I was amazed at how entirely the barriers which had just now appeared so insuperable between Hortense and myself, had disappeared.



## CHAPTER X.

## A GREAT PARTY. A DISTINGUISHED GUEST.

More than a year has passed since the reader last saw the sweet and gentle face of Elsie, the beautiful Hortense, the stately little aunt, the gracious uncle, and this scribe; if indeed, he has ever at all had a look at the latter; for now that I come to think of it, I have as yet given no "descriptive list" of myself.

It is a December evening of an almost Arctic winter, and at Christmas-tide. Mr. Mansard, a wealthy neighbor of Elsie's uncle, is to give on this evening in honor of a distinguished visitor, a grand party, to which Elsie, Hortense and myself are bidden. It is 8 o'clock and I am making my toilet. I am not to be arrayed this night in brown tweed. The year now ending has wrought an Aladdin-like change in my affairs. My professional success is the marvel, as in a less generous profession, it would be the envy, of a bar far-famed for ability. I am no longer a mere student and copyist. For many months I have been the partner of Colonel Townshend, whose generous behavior to me has been more than fatherly, and would shame me but for a secret purpose, cherished, that when he ceases to work, he shall still remain my partner.

I take a last look into the mirror which reflects my image from head to foot. I am dressed as becomes a gentleman about to attend an evening party.

Wrapping myself in an ample cloak, for cloaks are worn this winter, I bend my steps toward the mansion now grown to be a second home to me; and wherein lives the one being without whom and whose love all the world would be, as I rate matters, nothing.

Forgive me, mother, that I have exalted any other created being above thee. But doth not the Scriptures, so dear to thy Christian heart, say: "For this cause shall a man forsake father and mother, and cleave unto his wife"?



And in this era of liberal *exegeses* may not the text be construed to mean sweetheart as well?

Ah, mammy-mine, "the Cradocks" are a no more "steadfast people" than the Munros.

"O Felix, dear, we are growing so impatient;" was the second salutation from the lips of Elsie; and she led me into the parlor.

But we could not tarry, as the carriage was in waiting and we were, the young ladies insisted, already late.

"Who is this guest, to meet whom Mr. Mansard has invited all the young people of the city?" I asked, as we were driven on.

"An old friend, or rather a young friend, but an old acquaintance, a gentleman whom he knew in California," was Elsie's answer.

"He is vastly wealthy, we hear, having gone to California years ago, and having been one of the fortunate few who had prudence enough to save the gold which they found," was Hortense's contribution to our stock of information. Then presently she added: "We saw him to-day—Elsie and I. He appeared, from our imperfect observation, to be strikingly handsome."

"And you have kept this a secret from me, Elsie?" I cried. "Not only kept it from me," I went on, "but are having me carry you right into the danger. Why, this is monstrous! Jonas," I cried, "stop! turn back—take us back!" And I made as if I were really about to have the carriage stop.

This, you will say, was silly enough. And so it was; and I had not set it down here, but for the reception it had at the hands of my companions. True, Hortense laughed a little, as a matter of politeness, perhaps, rather than because she was amused. But Elsie appeared greatly annoyed. She said in suppressed, half-frightened tones:

"Pray, Felix, do not say such—" Finding she hesitated, I added, "silly things?"

"Yes," she answered, "it is so unlike you. You startle me. I am surely nervous, this evening."

She was so serious that I became ashamed of my



foolish sally and begged her pardon. But, for the rest of the journey, conversation lagged so that I was relieved when we reached our destination.

Next to that of Elsie's uncle, the residence of this host was the most imposing in all the city. It was all ablaze. Two *suites* of large rooms—one on each side of a great, old-fashioned corridor or hallway, through the center, were already well filled with a brilliant company of gaily dressed young people. Having mingled little in the world of fashion, it was to me a rare and pleasing scene.

While my companions were known to all, and in turn knew all, most of the guests were strangers to me. But when we appeared in the parlors, we were soon in the midst of greetings and introductions, for my companions were universally sought after; and many were curious if nothing more to meet "the young advocate," who had sprung so suddenly into the arena, full-armed.

And now the daughter of the host is seen approaching, leaning on the arm of a stranger, almost gigantic, and moving with the bearing of a prince imperial. The group, of which we are the center, are instantly silent. As the stately figure approached, he bends his lofty gaze full upon my companions, taking, I thought, small note of myself. He is presented first to the young ladies, but I do not hear his name. Having saluted them with a grace and ease new to me, he turns toward me.

"Mr. Munro, Mr. Costo," is all that the young hostess says. We bow, formally, neither, I think, speaking.

The hostess had introduced the stranger to "Miss Downs," instead of to Miss Cradock—for since Elsie had come as a child into her uncle's family and had taken the place of her deceased cousin, Elsie Downs, she was often called by her uncle's family name.

Turning now toward Elsie, for the stranger had fallen into conversation with Hortense, I discover that her face is white; even her lips are bloodless, and in her eyes is an expression which in all the years I had never seen the like of there. Taking her arm, I led her away.



Fortunately it happened that there were few people in the wide hall. I led her thither, and to a seat.

"In heaven's name, Elsie, what ails you?" I asked, in alarm. Turning her eyes, still full of the unwonted look, up toward mine, she gasped:

"*Who is that man?*"

"Why, Elsie—darling," I said, "why do you ask? What does this mean? Poor child!" I continued, taking her hand and stroking it gently. "You are nervous to-night. I fear my foolish behavior caused this. Is my darling ill?"

"No, no," she answered. "I am not ill. But, oh, Felix, who is that stranger? *Who is he?*"

"Why, Elsie," I answered, "this is not like my brave little girl. What is there about this stranger that so alarms you?"

"Oh, I don't know, Felix, dear; I don't know, but I have seen that face in my dreams; surely I have, and there is something awful connected with it." Then after a pause, as if reflecting, she added:

"I have, I surely have seen those eyes before this night!"

I had scarcely seen his eyes at all. Indeed, I had seen only in general outline a stranger of uncommon stature, haughty bearing and great dignity. One thing about his face, besides that it was a strong face, I had observed, namely, that on one cheek there was an ugly scar, deep and long, which appeared to mar what, else, would have been a handsome, lofty countenance. But now, I determined to more closely observe the stranger. Having with loving solicitude urged Elsie to dismiss her fears, and seeing that her self-possession had been in part at least restored, I led her back to Hortense, and leaving her with a company of gay young friends, quietly sought out the stalwart guest. I found him in earnest discourse with several gentlemen, the host among them. I soon learned that the host and his guest were recounting the exploit in which the wound producing the ugly scar had been received.

"Mr. Costo was defending an emigrant train against the Indians, when one of the red devils hurled his tom-



ahawk into his face," was the statement I heard the host make to the group of listeners.

While I listened the stranger turned his face toward me, though not seeming to see me, so that a strong light fell upon it. For the life of me, I could not have told what it was in this face that affected me strangely. I endeavored to persuade myself that the sensation was produced by my sympathy with Elsie's mood ; but this scarcely sufficed.

In repose, the aspect of the stranger was remarkable. His head and face were large ; his complexion sallow ; his hair, thick and black, and worn short ; his nose, large, but well-shapen ; his eyes full, large and dark, and wearing the most placid look of indifference. There was in his bearing, evidence of culture. His hands and feet were, for his size, small. He could not have been less than six feet three, in stature, and the ugly scar aside, his face was what all the world call handsome, and many would have esteemed it noble. In age I judged him to be thirty years. His host had said of him, that in his youth he had gone to California and prosecuted there a successful career, that they had met (the host having gone thither also, in search of fortune) and had for a time been partners. But several years ago, the host had returned to his family, since when he had heard only occasionally from Costo, until a few months before, when he had received a letter, foretelling his present visit. Costo was reputed wealthy.

He dressed with elegance and in perfect taste, except that he wore a great profusion of jewelry. Indeed, its quantity would have appeared vulgar but for its quality. One of these jewels, a diamond worn on his bosom, shone with such brilliance as fairly dazzled the eyes of the beholder.

Having inspected this person, to meet whom all the quality of the town had been bidden to the Mansard mansion, and not without being impressed by his magnificence, I returned to Elsie, whom I found with Hortense and other familiar friends. She greeted me anxiously, her eyes shining with a strange light, her face



still pale. Again I offered my arm, and excusing ourselves to our friends, I led her down the great room and into the corridor. She clung to my arm as if an open enemy were menacing her liberty. Seated alone again, I waited for her to begin.

As if afraid of the answer she was to receive, and still clinging to my arm, she turned her face up toward mine, as she whispered: "O Felix, who is that man?" I essayed to answer with cheerful indifference, though I was anything but indifferent, in fact:

"Indeed, I have not the slightest idea. You are right, my darling; if you ever saw that face before this evening, it was, sure enough, in your dreams."

As if somewhat relieved, she went on: "Tell me truly, Felix, does that face suggest to you no face of the past? Does it not suggest—?" She did not finish; and was it a shudder that shook her like an ague now?

"Why, Elsie," I said tenderly, as I drew her to my bosom, "you are ill; my brave little girl is ill. Let us go home."

"O no," she whispered, "that will but attract attention. Let us remain for a time, yet. You will stay near me, Felix. Do not leave me, please."

"Not for a moment," I said, kissing her dear, sweet face, and now, somehow in spite of myself, sharing her alarm.

Whether in the midst of her friends or strolling with me alone through the apartments, she still clung nervously to my arm. At length Hortense came to my side and whispered:

"Elsie is ill; let us go." But my darling heard and quickly answered: "No, no, cousin, I am not ill."

I never have been able to understand why it was, that in this frame of mind she was averse to going home; for now, when Hortense spoke, others were leaving and to have left would have challenged no remark or attention. But I had determined to go and was moving through the crowd in search of Hortense, when I discovered her on the arm of the stranger, as they made their way toward us. Elsie, too, saw their approach and shrank still closer to me. Again the



stranger greeted me, but his eyes were bent on Elsie's face; and now that I saw them better, they were wonderful eyes. Hortense and he had been speaking of Elsie; for turning to her, he said in a voice low and musical, and with elaborate politeness: "Ah, pardon me, but I have just learned from your fair cousin, that Miss Mansard, through an excusable inadvertence, wrongly announced your name as 'Miss Downs.' It is Miss Cradock, I am told. To be sure it is a slight matter, since the name given is that of your honored kinsman, but as a stranger in your city, I would wish to know so charming a person by her own proper name." He uttered these last words with a gesture the most graceful I had ever seen; and with an expression and in a tone perfectly charming. I felt, rather than saw, that Elsie was shrinking from him and toward me, more and more; but she answered in accents steady and brave:

"You are very gracious, Mr. Costo; the mistake was most natural; as, having lived with my uncle since childhood, I am often called by his name."

The stranger saw that Elsie was clinging nervously to my arm. He went on in the same gentle voice to utter other polite speeches that I cannot record now, for I did not hear them then. For at the moment when Elsie ceased speaking, I saw something in the eyes of the handsome Mr. Costo which for the moment stopped my blood as if frozen, and gave me a sensation of choking. By great effort I mastered this, and at the first pause in his smooth speech, said:

"Miss Cradock is not quite well, this evening. I have urged her to go, but she is loth to leave such agreeable company; though, I think, she has grown worse instead of better."

How earnestly he expressed regret and sympathy. He joined me in urging Elsie to go, but speaking for all the company, protested how profoundly sorry they would be at learning of her indisposition, and that by reason of it they must lose her radiant presence; and turning toward Hortense, he added: "And that of your charming cousin."



But all this time I could see in his eyes that expression which had so stunned me.

As he turned from us Elsie breathed a deep sigh of relief, as she said to me, softly: "Let us go at once."

Our journey homeward was a silent one.

When I had led the young ladies to the porch, a servant said that Mr. Downs had charged her to bid me in his name to remain over night, and to say that my room was in readiness. For this good man had set apart in his spacious mansion a room for my exclusive use, and I sometimes out of gratitude and deference to him, occupied it. I was pleased now, as I was desirous of some further discourse with Elsie, and could not keep Jonas, who was to carry me home, waiting.

Seated alone with her in the library, Elsie looked silently into my face for a long moment, then in a hoarse whisper, asked: "Felix, dear, am I losing my senses? Tell me, do you think there can be danger of my losing my reason, as my poor aunt Elsie did?"

Her manner alarmed me. She really had misgivings as to her mental state. I drew very near her, took her hand in both my own, as I answered:

"No, Elsie, your mind is all right. You have shown to-night that its power of penetration is extraordinary—phenomenal."

"O then, is it true? Do not tell me my suspicions are true! Do not tell me that it is indeed—he."

"Why, Elsie, my darling," I cried entreatingly, "what is the meaning of this? Suppose this man is indeed, Otto Castelar?" But as I uttered this name, she shrieked aloud and clung about my neck, trembling violently. She lay in my arms shivering as with an ague. It was a long time before I ventured to make any suggestion, and then I gently entreated her to retire. She had grown calmer, when she said:

"Felix, darling, I must tell you more; I must know more. You were about to ask me just now, what difference it could make, if this man is indeed—he. O Felix, if this whole world were mine, I would gladly give it to know that it could make no difference with me—with you, with our future!"



And as she said this, though struggling to maintain calmness, a shudder shook her, and there was in the tones of her voice that which made my heart ache. She went on:

"Do not, pray, Felix, do not withhold your opinion as to the identity of this man. I observed your look just now, while he talked with us. You saw then, what I had seen at once. O Felix, there is in all this wicked world, but one human being with eyes like that."

I saw it was useless to attempt postponement of the topic, and so said: "I ought to be honest with you, Elsie, even though I try to cheat myself. I fear your suspicion is correct. I try to persuade myself that it is a merely chance resemblance of these eyes to those; but that last look bent upon us, is too strikingly like what you think it."

"Ah, Felix," she answered, "if it were but that, I might doubt, but I do not, alas! depend upon my recollection of the eyes we saw years ago. I have seen them a thousand times in my dreams. In these, I have seen the boy grow into a comely youth, the youth into manhood, and that face was as familiar to me to-night as if I had seen it every week, through all the years."

She had said this slowly and in the same suppressed voice. She lifted her eyes to mine, for till now, she had spoken while gazing vacantly straight away, and looking into my face with a great fear in her own, went on:

"Even that hideous scar was familiar to me. I can recall the year and the month of the year when first in my dreams, I saw it—a long, bleeding wound, sheer across the side of his face."

"In God's name, I entreat you to say no more! You will drive me mad!" I cried, shaken with a sense of terror. She went on, as if I had not spoken:

"And forever in these visions I see you, Felix; sometimes far away, at others near; but struggle as I may, and I always seem to struggle to go to you, and you appear equally anxious to come to me, I never succeed. It always ends in his getting between us, and keeping us hopelessly apart."

As she ended, everything was in a maze and com-



motion before my eyes. A thousand jarring sounds invaded my senses. I knew I was deathly pale. I gasped for breath! I saw dimly the outlines of Elsie's face, as frightened at my aspect, she looked a moment upon me, then turned and flew from the room, crying for help. I think there was a brief moment of unconsciousness, and then I exerted all my power in one supreme effort to arouse myself, to throw off the incubus under which I lay as one dead. Then I saw Elsie flying toward me. She, I knew, thought me dead. She threw herself upon me, crying:

"Oh, my darling, I have killed you—murdered you!"

She bathed my face, while all the time I was acutely conscious, but unable to move. I even remembered that I had suffered a like attack and had been supposed past aid, at the death of my father.

But now others of the household arrive, in answer to Elsie's cries. Slowly I grew able to move, and after a time to speak. I was aided to my room, and Cooney begged to be allowed to remain with me. I was glad to have the faithful fellow at hand. I am sure he did not sleep. Several times during the night, I heard gentle raps on the door, and when Cooney answered them, there was a murmur of voices just outside. It was Elsie, come to inquire after me.

I slept little. My mind was dwelling upon the events of the night. I formed two resolves: One that Elsie and I must keep our discovery a secret; the other that Otto Castelar must be kept in ignorance that we even suspected his identity.

I must also, I felt, keep from Elsie all knowledge of my dream, of more than a year ago, so like her own, in which, as the reader will recall, Otto Castelar had barred my way to her, and which coincidence had so affected me this night.

On joining the family at breakfast, I saw that Elsie had been so occupied with thoughts of my strange attack, that it had driven into the background all thought of last evening's discoveries, and she was, doubtless, far more cheerful than she would have been if she had not been alarmed on my account. I explained to my



friends that I had once before suffered a similar attack.

"Was there any special reason for the former attack?" questioned my host.

I could but tell the occasion, whereupon he eyed both Elsie and myself sharply, as he asked:

"To what do you attribute your attack last night?"

I had expected this to follow, and answered promptly; for there must be nothing said or done to provoke inquiry:

"It must have been induced by the scenes and excitement of the evening. You forget, Mr. Downs, that I am unused to such occasions and their incident excitements."

I could plainly see that this explanation did not satisfy the host, but he delicately forebore further inquiry, though he continued from time to time to curiously eye Elsie, into whose face something of the disturbed look of last night, had crept again.

"Elsie," I said, as soon as we were alone, "I am sorry to recur to the painful subject of last night, but I want to entreat that under no circumstances, you will speak of our discovery. If you should chance to meet this man again, pray endeavor to act toward him as if he were in fact what he affects to be—a stranger. Much—we cannot tell how much—may depend upon this." She drew near, saying:

"He already knows that I at least have recognized him. And may not this hasten his departure? Oh, Felix, if I knew at this moment that he was a thousand miles away, I should be the happiest being in all this world!"

After speaking words of courage and faith, which, alas, I did not myself feel, and which sounded like mockery, I tenderly took my leave, with a heart pained and sore, and with an oppressive sense that a great danger menaced our happiness.



## CHAPTER II.

## DEATH OF ELSIE'S UNCLE.

“Wolves hunt in packs.” And is it true that calamities ride down upon us, double?

An hour before nightfall, on this same day, a messenger brought me tidings that Mr. Downs was dying. I hastened to his bedside, for I could scarcely have loved my father more than I now loved this generous old man. He had been attacked by what appeared a fatal hemorrhage. He lay with half closed eyes, and but for the gentle breathing, there remained no sign of life. I soon learned from one of the physicians, what I already feared, that there was slight chance that the patient would rally, and none that he would recover.

Poor Elsie stood bravely by her uncle. Hortense and her aunt were prostrated by the sudden blow.

For a week I remained, night and day, at the house, and for most of the time at the bedside. Elsie and I were rarely both out of the room. We could not think of trusting our dearest friend in the hands of hired nurses, alone. And the wife was so ill as to require the care of Hortense.

It was some days after the attack that the patient appeared, for the time, to notice his surroundings. Elsie and I were alone with him; he opened his eyes and they rested on the face of his niece. And there came into them such a yearning look, that Elsie was unable to restrain her tears. His lips moved. I was sitting in such position on the other side of the bed, that he did not see me. Elsie stooped to listen. He whispered, only the word:

“Felix.”

I did not hear, but Elsie answered, softly:

“Felix is here, uncle; he has not been out of the house an hour since you fell ill.”

I moved around the bed and stood by the side of Elsie. He gazed at us for a long time with a pleased



smile, then slowly closed his eyes. A little later he opened them again, and again his lips moved. Elsie bent to listen. In broken whispers he said :

“I must speak with you and Felix, before I go, but am too weak now.”

Elsie repeated it to me. I spoke to him cheerfully and hopefully of his recovery, but saw that he was incredulous. It was agreed between Elsie and myself that one of us should always be by his bedside, and that when he should feel able to speak, the other should be summoned.

Thrice within the first week, once with his host, the stranger, Costo, had called to inquire after the condition of the sick man.

Ten days had elapsed and now our friend was so much improved, and had grown so much stronger, that the physicians began to speak hopefully ; though as often as they did so in his presence, the patient would gravely shake his head.

He had been stricken while in his library, and still remained there, his bed having been brought down.

About 8 o'clock one evening, Elsie and I were again alone with him, one on each side of the bed, but I farthest away.

“Come to this side, Felix, that both may be near me and each other,” he said. I obeyed. He was propped up so with pillows all about him that he sat almost erect. He took Elsie's hand and lifting it, gently kissed it, then presently laid it in mine. For a time he sat looking silently into our faces with an expression of loving tenderness in his eyes ; then he said, slowly : “Yes, God has so ordered ! You know that such is the faith of your mother, as it was of your lamented father, Elsie. And I have heard that it is the faith in which you, too, have been reared, Felix ; that God orders these things.” And again he looked at us silently, as we stood with bowed heads, waiting to hear his gracious words. He spoke in the hollow voice of the sick :

“What God hath joined together, let no man put asunder,” came presently, in solemn accents. And the hand I held in mine trembled as “a reed shaken by the wind,” and Elsie drew nearer to me.



"My daughter," he continued, "you have always loved Felix, though you did not know your stupid uncle suspected it. I used before I had seen you, to feel jealous of you, my son. But when I met you, my old heart gave a great bound and I said to myself, 'That's the boy for my Elsie;' for you had a comely, honest face, Felix, if I do say it in your presence. And then, when I grasped your hand and felt that it was hard with honest toil, and saw that your face was bronzed, I lifted my heart toward heaven and prayed that it might be God's will that nothing should ever come between you, my children."

He spoke slowly and solemnly. At the last words, Elsie trembled again. Having gathered strength, he went on:

"Although your mother had spoken so kindly of Felix when she visited us, that I had no doubt of her sentiments toward him, yet when I saw, certainly, how matters stood, I felt it my duty to write and apprise her. She carried the letter to your mother, Felix, and they talked it all over, and I have her answer. It appears that the good women both have felt from your very early childhood, that you were destined for each other, and have never ceased to pray for that end; though neither knew what was in the other's heart, until the interview over my letter.

"I have said all this because I am going to leave you, and wished you to know how I feel on a subject so important to you both."

At these words Elsie could scarcely suppress her sobs, while I was little less affected. She lifted her face streaming with tears, and said, gently: "O my darling uncle, please do not say you are going to leave us; you must not, shall not go!" And she leaned her head on his shoulder and gently stroked his face.

"There, there now, my child," he said, "let me go on while I may. I feel that it would be a great comfort if these old eyes could see you perfectly happy. I have counted on this joy so long that I cannot endure to be disappointed of it. I would not distress you, but I am quite certain that if your marriage does not take place



at once, I shall not live to witness it. What do my children say?"

For a long moment both were silent and motionless, then Elsie laid her hand in mine. I understood, and simply said: "To-morrow?" and softly the sweet voice answered, "To-morrow."

Deeply touched at our behavior, the dying man laid a hand on each bowed head, as we knelt before him: "O may God bless you, my children!" he said. "It was not now, nor so that you had arranged your nuptials, but your acquiescence the better proves how much you love your dying old uncle. For Felix, in my childish fondness, I have longed to hear you call me 'Uncle Hugh,' as Elsie does." I called him so now, expressing my gratitude in every form of speech which a grateful heart could suggest.

The lights were burning low. I had risen, and chancing to turn my eyes toward a north window, the curtains whereof had been lifted, they fell upon the towering form of Otto Castelar, standing just without wrapped in a great cloak and as motionless as a statue. The moonlight falling upon him, made him as plainly visible to me, as we to him. He saw that he was discovered, and he turned and moved away. Looking quickly at Elsie, I perceived that she had not seen him. I was not conscious of the degree of my agitation; but a moment later, when Elsie looked into my face, what she saw there sufficed to alarm her. She arose, saying eagerly, but in a tone so low that the patient could not hear: "Felix, what ails you? You are ill again." And taking my hand, she led me to a sofa.

I was too glad that she had not suspected the real cause, to deny that I was ill. I said that I was better now, and urged her to attend to what her uncle might wish to say further. She did as requested. And now that I could reflect on the behavior of Costo, I was seized with one of those attacks of rage, unreasoning fury, of which to my shame, I have had occasion to speak before. I think that if at the moment I had been armed, I should have followed the eavesdropper and had an accounting at once.



But the sick man speaks again, and I returned to the bedside. He was saying to Elsie: "This is all that I felt I must say now; and since you are both weary with long watching, let me persuade you to go and sleep to-night." He appeared so solicitous, that when the nurses came, we took our leave of him.

We repaired to the parlor near the library, and were alone. Elsie at once recurred to the strange look which she had observed in my face. Kneeling before me on a rug as she often did, and looking up into my face, she said:

"I thought just now that you were ill; I was so confused I could not think rightly. But I remember now; it was not the aspect of illness, at all. It was that *other* look, Felix, which I have seen from time to time in your face, since ever we were children together—the look which I saw in the forest that night. What did it mean? What provoked it? Did the words of my poor, dear uncle suggest anything—anybody—O Felix, why *does* he speak as if he feared some one may come between us? Was it that which caused you to look so?"

The questions followed upon each other so fast that I had no time to reflect upon an answer that should be at once true and fitting. I dared not add to my poor darling's anxiety. I evaded:

"I fear, my Elsie, that the recital of your dreams and your constant expression of apprehension has rendered me morbid. Your uncle's words were calculated to remind me of what you had said. And yet, now that we reflect upon them, there is really nothing which should so affect us. It is but natural that loving us so, he should pray that nothing may come between us. It is, indeed, but a prayer for our happiness, and should excite in our hearts only sentiments of gratitude, not those of foreboding."

My poor, stumbling, evasive answer had accomplished more than a truer and better might. It touched her heart.

"Yes, yes; I know I am ungrateful," she said. "Here I am, alarmed at the kindest solicitude of this best of men. Instead of being happy at the prospect lying be-



fore me, I am seeking among flowers to see if, perchance, there may not lurk a thorn. Forgive me, Felix, for I have filled your heart, too, with forebodings. I know I have, for you are scarcely yourself since that night. I thought I had killed you outright, then; and when I found I had not, I made all sorts of compacts with myself, never to act so again. I am surely losing my courage."

I had lifted her to a seat by my side. And now I reminded her of our promise that on the morrow we were to be joined in that holy estate, wherein none could interpose between us.

For the moment Elsie seemed perfectly happy.

"Yes," she cried as there shone in her eyes the light of a great joy. "Yes, uncle Hugh is right; God orders all things! Our marriage will put it beyond the power and the hope of any one to get between us. It will render such design futile. Ah, I am sure it is all for the best."

And then drawing nearer, and speaking with bated breath, she concluded:

"Seeing his purpose defeated and his errand a hopeless one, he will go his way. And oh, my darling, if God will grant me that neither sleeping nor waking I shall ever see that face again, I will repine at nothing!"

We had much to say of the morrow, and the happy but solemn event appointed. At length, and when the night was drawing toward the morning, obeying my earnest command, Elsie retired.

Tenderly we parted on this night into which had come so many events.

Oh, gentle angel of repose, touch with thy soothing finger, the eyes of this well beloved maiden, and close them in balmy, gracious sleep! Guard her pillow against every disturbing vision and bar, with sweet forgetfulness, the gates of recollection; or if so be, thou must lift the mysterious veil of memory, and there shall come to her in the darkness, faces, let them, dear angel, be the faces of those she loves, that her soul be not shaken nor disturbed, for a little season; for soon, alas! she must awaken to sorrow and heartache and tears!



\* \* \* \* \*

I know not how long I sat alone, musing, my mind filled with visions of the future, my heart stirred by emotions, strangely diverse. I had at last fallen asleep, when suddenly I was rudely shaken, and a voice said, hurriedly :

“Mr. Munro, come ! Quick !”

Before fairly awake, I was hastening toward the library. But when I reached the bedside, Elsie’s uncle was dead. A recurrence of internal hemorrhage had quickly done its work.

A minute more and the members of the family began to arrive. First the wife, looking older by many years than when the reader saw her last ; for she had loved her husband tenderly. She is stunned by the blow and moans so piteously, and looks so humble that one forgets that this is the stately dame of the past.

She is followed by Hortense, wringing her hands and weeping ; her wondrous hair streaming about her shoulders, her dark eyes with not a vestige of their look of proud indifference remaining, her olive complexion, now darker by contrast with the white wrapper she has hastily put on ; she seems a fitting companion of the messenger who but now has touched and frozen the blood in the generous heart of her kinsman.

And last, for she had fallen into deep slumber, came Elsie. Not a moan, not an exclamation escaped her compressed and bloodless lips ; not a tear came to moisten her burning eyes. Her face, white, and wearing an expression of infinite pain, appeared like the wife’s, much older than when a few hours ago, we had seen it. With clasped hands she stood gazing upon the quiet face, now wearing that patient look which comes and smoothes, at last, all the wrinkles from the faces of the aged, making them look young again. Her bosom swelled with a great agony as she gazed apparently unconscious of the presence of any but her beloved dead, into this peaceful face. Slowly she bent and kissed the marble brow, reverently, and turning away walked to a sofa, into which she sank.

There are seasons when words are mockery ; states



of the hearts and souls of us which no speech can compassionate. We may silently pity the sufferer, but we are unthinking mockers, if we attempt more. There is no friendship so close, no love so tender, that it may intrude at such moment.

I had done what I could to soothe the other niece, who constantly appeared about to sink under the blow. Having persuaded both her and the wife to return to the latter's apartments, I quietly took a seat by Elsie's side. Taking her hands presently, into my own, I gently unclasped them. She turned and gazed into my face with such a strangely absent expression as fairly made my heart stand still. I led her gently away and into the room where we had sat last night, for it was morning now.

At this moment occurred an incident, which but for Elsie's condition would have been inopportune, but which I welcomed; so anxious was I to have her mind diverted from the sad thoughts now engrossing it.

Cooney, who had been admitted into the library to see the face of his benefactor, was heard to inquire for Elsie and myself. The housekeeper told him where we were, but admonished him not to disturb us. He paid no heed, but came in his quaint, ambling gait, almost running straight to us. His eyes, still suffused with tears, were strained to their utmost width and big with momentous intelligence. He paused in front of us and stood panting for words, with which to begin. What he was to say was for our ears only, and he looked about warily to see if there were others who might hear.

"Oh, chillers," he cried, trying very hard to suppress his voice, while his little wide-open eyes rolled from side to side. "Ise seed suthin; Cooney's seed suthin 'at 'll s'prise 'es chillers, 'l warrunt. Its s'prised me tull I aint no mo' sense 'an 'e fool."

"What have you seen, Cooney?" I asked, in a voice to reassure him. "Sit down," I continued, "and take your time and tell us."

He sat down, still panting.

"W'at ez I seed?" he cried. "W'at ez Cooney



seed? Oh, Muster Felix, it's mazin'! I ne'er'd a bleev'd eze ere eyez, ef 'a wasn't jest my owen eyez, 'cept Elsie's an' yourn, Muster Felux, 'a course I's bleev'd 'em."

Then bending forward, he continued, in a hoarse whisper, capable of being heard at a greater distance than his audible speech:

"Ise seed Otto Casteel!" for it was, as we remembered now, by this name the poor fellow had always called Castelar.

Having said this, he drew back, straightening himself up, with that look of importance common to silly people. But seeing that we evinced no surprise, the look changed to one of astonishment. He glanced from one to the other, inquiringly; when he seemed to have concluded that we did not believe him. He bent forward again, and in whining tones, went on:

"'E chillers b'leeve 'at pore Cooney's a lyin', ur' at 'e doan know. But, ef 'ese ey-es ain't seed Otter Casteel two times 'a night, 'en 'e never seed 'e chillers, nur nuther uv 'em."

Elsie had not spoken, but she did now, in such pathetic tones as seemed greatly to affect the simple fellow.

"Cooney, do you love Felix and me?"

Cooney dropped upon his knees and began wringing his hands in the manner of supplication, crying meantime:

"O Elsie, please doan look 'at ere way at pore Cooney. Please doan ax 'at ere question—do Cooney love 'eze chillers? O Elsie, Elsie! O Muster Felux, w'at do 'e pore chile mean, a axin me does I love 'er—'oo ez nuss'd an' 'kearn fur 'er uver sins she wus a weenin,' a'mos'."

And he was growing so loud, that I took hold of him, and it was only by shaking and scolding him a little, that I was able to quiet him.

"Elsie does not mean that you do not love us; she knows you do love us. But listen, she wants to say something to you, because you love us," I explained.

Elsie then said to him, as he sat with his eyes and mouth open:

"Cooney, you must not tell any one that you have



seen this man. Remember, you are to tell no one. If you should, you would do Felix and me great harm."

But she added in a moment, eagerly:

"Where did you see him, Cooney?"

I feared this and the answer, but saw no remedy.

"I see 'm a lookin' in at 'e winner, las' night, an' I see 'im a lookin' in at 'e winner a mornin'; 'e was a lookin at ayr uncle, 'e was."

Elsie turned her eyes upon me and there arose in them again, the look of terror I had seen before, as she said, in the same tones in which she always spoke of this man:

"O Felix, Felix, it was *that* you saw last night; and you did not tell *me*."

"It could only have distressed you, Elsie," I answered.

I learned that evening, that while I was absent for an hour, Mr. Costo called to leave his card and condolences.

"It was kind and thoughtful of him," said Hortense.

"It was audaciously impertinent," I thought, but said nothing.

---

## CHAPTER XII.

COSTO AND FELIX MEET. HORTENSE MAKES SOME DISCLOSURES.

Scarcely a week had passed after the funeral of Mr. Downs, before the stranger called at the mansion; not in a merely formal way, for he spent quite an hour in discourse with Hortense. As he took his leave, I met him on the walk. I confess that the meeting greatly agitated me, but I managed to suppress all outward signs. He wore as he approached, that same lofty look of indifference observed before, and which now I suddenly discovered, was simulated. I saw moreover, that while pretending not to, he was eyeing me narrowly.



I returned his look of scrutiny, not furtively, but openly, and with no slight feeling of indignation. We were at this moment, as both knew, mortal foes. It was however, far from the purpose of each to disclose the fact to the other.

"Shall I simply bow, and pass on, or shall I stay and sound him?" I asked myself as he drew near. But he saved me the trouble of answer. Quickly extending his hand, he said with much apparent cordiality:

"I had hoped to meet you at the house of your afflicted friends, and protracted my stay in expectation that you would come. I am glad indeed, to see you again. I have heard many commendations of your devotion to the good man who has just died. Nothing so distinguishes the noble from the ignoble of our race, as the quality of gratitude. The Spanish have a proverb like this, as rendered in our clumsier English: 'No grateful man is an unfaithful man.'"

All this he said in that musical, fascinating voice, which even prejudice can scarcely resist. I looked gravely into his eyes as I answered with more elaboration than was my wont: "You are always equipped with ready and gracious words, an accomplishment I sometimes envy in others, being of plain speech myself; but none the less I appreciate what you so kindly say."

"Ah, you under-estimate your powers, I am sure, Mr. Munro. No other youth of twenty years ever achieved such fame by a single effort in the forum, or on the rostrum, as you have. To belittle your powers in this regard, is to shame your humble, plodding friends, who must walk while you soar."

But this sort of rencounter was always distasteful to me, as I am sure it must be to every candid and earnest man—in short, to him who is not a trifler, and I sought to end it. Besides, there began to spring up within me a sense of indignation at his bold impertinence.

I did not answer at once, nor at all in kind. I hesitated, but continued to look him gravely in the face. And now there was no mistaking the aspect; there spread slowly over his eyes, that misty film, that shut



in, as effectually as if he had closed their lids, every expression which before had played within them.

I said, "Perhaps you will return to the house of our friends with me." And I was moving on, when to my amazement and horror (such are the wages of duplicity,) he deliberately turned about, and joined me, saying that it would give him pleasure to do so. For a moment I was speechless, but presently managed to say, "I hope you found the young ladies in a more cheerful frame than they have enjoyed since their great affliction." In my heart I was saying: "Has Elsie met him?" As if reading my mind, he answered:

"I did not have the pleasure of seeing Miss Cradock, who is, I learn, indisposed this afternoon. Her cousin is quite as cheerful as could be expected."

"Poor girl," I said, thinking only of Elsie; "it is a hard blow for her loving heart. Her affection for her uncle was as deep and tender as the love of a daughter for her father."

"You refer to Miss Cradock?" he questioned, in strange tones.

"Certainly, certainly," I answered.

We had reached the house and were shown to the parlor, where Hortense yet remained.

I said to the little girl who served on such occasions:

"Here, Susie, carry my card to Miss Cradock; but wait a moment, I will say that if she is not feeling able to come down, she must not exert herself." What I did write on the card was: "Elsie, Costo is here. It is evident that you must meet him sooner or later. If you are not too ill, come." The girl started, but she met Elsie at the door. She had seen from her window the meeting between Costo and myself, and that he had returned with me. She had moreover been moved by the same thought that had inspired my note.

She was dressed in mourning apparel. As she stood in the hall, reading my message, I thought she had never looked so lovely. Having finished reading, she turned and walked toward us. And now, that I saw her face clearly, I felt no longer any misgiving. It was full of lofty courage. Her eyes shone with a light that there



was no mistaking. Glancing quickly at Costo, I saw that he was observing her from behind those odious barricades.

Courage is contagious. I determined that I would learn more than I knew of the mind of this man, despite his disguise.

He arose, and greeted Elsie with his usual perfect grace. She returned the greeting with undaunted eye and placid face, and as if he had been the most commonplace acquaintance. As she turned to greet me, I gave her a look, which plainly said; "Bravely done, darling. You are yourself, again. Let us have this matter out." She understood me perfectly.

"I found Mr. Costo leaving and brought him back. I am sorry to hear you are indisposed this evening," I said. She looked surprised, but answered:

"Of course, Mr. Munro, I am not quite well, but I am feeling better than usual *this* afternoon." And she looked inquiringly at Hortense, but it was evident that *she* had not given the statement out.

Perhaps it was malice; it may have been but a method of reaching results; one can never quite understand the operations of his own mind when intent on an object. At all events, I said as if it were a wholly unimportant matter, as ordinarily it would have been:

"Mr. Costo informed me just now that he had learned that you were indisposed; but I am delighted to see you looking almost yourself again."

For the first time, the stranger showed signs of annoyance, and appeared to be nonplussed. But he rallied quickly.

"Ah!" he began, in that peerless voice, "I was at fault. I stated to Mr. Munro an inference as a fact, and omitted to explain that it was an inference. I took it for granted that you were ill, as you did not appear while I was here."

"I was not aware of your presence, Mr. Costo," was the quiet answer.

It appears small matter enough, to the reader, for such an incident forever discovers more to the parties to it than can be conveyed in words. But by it this



visitor had been placed in the always awkward position of having gravely stated a falsehood; and then when confronted with the fact, had made a bungling explanation.

But there was one present who did not at all seem to appreciate the situation. Miss Parté continued to talk as if nothing had happened, addressing what she said for most part to the handsome stranger. But he was unable to recover himself, and soon took his leave.

Miss Parté, turning to me, said with enthusiasm:

"You will excuse me, Mr. Munro, for you do not affect to be charming or accomplished, in a social way; you have a greater and a loftier ambition; but really, I think Mr. Costo the most charming and accomplished man I have ever met. Besides, he is wonderfully learned and widely traveled. Why, he knows more about *this* State than a born Hoosier. He can give you the most perfect account of rural Hoosier life; can talk like them, and is as familiar with their dialect as yourself, and I believe you confess to speaking it, chiefly."

"Perhaps he has lived in the State," I suggested.

"Barely passed through it when a lad, he tells me," she answered.

"Oh, well," I said, "that would be quite enough to enable so gifted a lad as he no doubt was, to acquire a thorough knowledge of the habits and dialect of so simple a people."

This satisfied the honest Hortense, though the manner of my speech might well have aroused suspicion in a mind more sophisticated.

"When is Mr. Costo to return to California?" I queried.

"Oh, not all, I think; at least not soon," Hortense answered. "He says his affairs do not require his personal attention, as he has trusty agents and partners," she added.

"Why, cousin, he seems to have been quite confidential with you," quietly remarked Elsie. Hortense blushed slightly.

"He has no doubt come to the States in search of a wife," I suggested.



"He intimated as much," said Hortense blushing, still.

"To you?" I questioned. An affirmative nod was her answer.

"Why, he is frank and open as the day! One would scarcely expect such candor on so short an acquaintance," I said, with some irony of accent.

"Oh, you must understand," cried Hortense, a little nettled, "that the suggestion was general, not personal."

"Oh!" I ejaculated. "He is tardy! and he has not yet reached the *personal* stage? Why, a gentleman of his complexion and nationality, should display more impetuosity one would think; more ardor."

This was too much; and when I came to reflect that Hortense was ignorant of all those facts known to Elsie and myself, and which served to color our opinions of the stranger, I regretted my words.

The girl was thoroughly vexed. Her eyes flashed, and her olive skin grew darker.

Changing my manner and speaking in tones of earnestness I said:

"Hortense, pardon my frivolous speech. I did not mean to vex you." And after a moment, for I had made up my mind, I went on:

"Hortense, Miss Parté, I feel it my duty to warn you to beware of this stranger."

If I had been less abrupt, the effect no doubt would have been different. But all at once the danger to the lovely girl became, to my mind, appalling; and I no more thought of the form of my speech than I should of the words with which to have warned her against a serpent, coiled and ready to strike.

She bent upon me a look of mingled surprise and indignation.

"By what right, pray, sir, do you assume to advise *me*?" she asked, in a voice full of scorn.

"In right of my friendship for this family—for you—in gratitude to him, my friend, who is no longer here to advise you. He loved you—would have died for your happiness! This is my warrant."

Then seeing the look of scorn deepen in her face,



and my alarm for her safety becoming greater, I cried :

“ If all this will not suffice, then, by the same right in which I would rescue you from drowning, or a burning building, or the toils of a serpent, I warn you to beware of this stranger !”

In my impetuosity, I had arisen and walked to where she sat. She lifted her hand as if to wave me back ; but having ended I stood looking earnestly down into her face. But in it were no signs of relenting. It had grown colder and harder. She arose, and with an irony—a contempt in look and voice, wholly indescribable, said :

“ I shall, if any proposals of a serious character are submitted to me, by this stranger, have the honor to refer him to my *guardian, Felix Munro, Esq.!*” And she moved toward the door. But I was too much in earnest to be balked so ; I barred the way.

“ Oh, Miss Parté, you have said this in irony, in contempt of my advice ; but promise me, seriously promise me that you *will* send him to me ! Tell him that I am your friend, that I was the friend of your dead uncle, that you have no other adviser ; tell him to come to me. I will deal justly, fairly, honestly, as if you were my own sister, by him, by you ! I will not forbid his addresses—his suit ; and if he shall return to you and you love him, and have faith in him, be his wife, then. But send him to me first, if you hope for happiness in this world !”

As I said this, Elsie had arisen and was standing with a hand on Hortense’s arm, as if to stay her flight.

The aspect of Hortense’s face had changed, but its expression now was even more painful than the other. She glanced from Elsie to me, as if endeavoring, but unable, to speak.

“ Fools !” she cried. “ Fools, must I tell you ? Do you wish to know the truth ? You shall, though it humiliate me to tell it you !” And she turned and walked to the seat she had quitted. She was fairly panting for breath, so great were her emotions. The face of Elsie was as unmoved as before, but as pale as death.

“ You warn *me*,” began Hortense. “ You tell *me* to



beware of this stranger. You force me to tell you that he cares nothing for *me*! You drive me to tell you, Felix Munro, that it is your own affianced bride—*your Elsie*, he loves, madly loves, and means to win from you!"

I knew it was better not to proceed now, though I meant to learn more. I took Elsie's hands in mine. They were deathly cold. For myself, while I was surprised at the words and manner of Hortense, I was not at the intelligence they conveyed. That Otto Castelar loved Elsie Cradock I knew; that he had come hither to win and carry her away I had not doubted; and finally, that the beautiful Hortense had been captivated by the grace and fine manners of the stranger, I had suspected. As I sat looking upon the bowed form of this dark beauty, now weeping quietly, there arose in my heart a feeling of compassion. And as if it had been suggested by this silent sentiment, the vexed girl exclaimed bitterly, but as if to herself: "Love *me*! The idea that any one should love *me*. Everybody is ready with his compliments to 'the dark beauty,' but who has *loved* me?" And the beautiful form was shaken by emotion. I looked at Elsie, and the tears were in her eyes. She glided to the side of her cousin and folded her in her arms. *I* would gladly have consoled the weeping girl, but was unskilled in such tasks.

The action of her cousin had touched, as sympathy ever does, the heart of Hortense. She slowly entwined her arms about the form of Elsie, and the two sat embracing each other as loving sisters might.

"Why, Elsie," again began Hortense, "he talks of nothing but you. Sometimes he speaks of you as 'Miss Cradock,' but oftener he calls you simply, 'Elsie,' as if he had known you all his life. He called you so that night at the party. And he speaks of Mr. Munro as 'Felix.' Perhaps that is not so remarkable, as every one calls him that; but the idea that he should call you 'Elsie,' is extraordinary—impertinent. As for me, he never thinks of calling me 'Hortense.' It is always 'Miss Parté.' What does it mean? And he asked me to tell him all about your past. I did; told him how



you and Felix were children together, and how you had always been lovers—how, when a child, you were called ‘Felix’s sweetheart;’ and there came into his eyes the strangest look, and he sighed deeply, just as if I were not there witnessing it. And that look in his eyes—why, it almost frightened me. And yet he is *so* handsome. What a wonderful face! What splendid eyes, too, when they do not wear that look. And this expression comes into them when he looks at you and Felix. I saw it this evening.”

Hortense paused, and there was a long space of silence, during which none of us moved. At length she began again, as if there had been no pause:

“Why, he asked me if it had not been arranged that you and Felix were to have been married soon, if uncle had not died. I told him that I had not heard of such arrangement. He said he had, but supposed it was an idle rumor, since I had not heard of it. And then he wanted to know when you are to be married, suggesting that in view of uncle’s death, you could not be for some months.”

“Are there any other facts leading to the opinion you have expressed?” I asked, anxious to learn fully of Costo’s behavior. After a thoughtful silence, Hortense answered:

“I see that I have failed to convey any idea of his manner, which, now I come to think of it, is more significant than his words.”

I understood her and assured her that what she had said, entirely sustained her opinion. “But,” I added, “none the less earnestly do I entreat you to beware of this man. He is the enemy of every pure woman in the world.” And some men are.

“You speak strongly, Mr. Munro,” said Hortense.

“Yes,” I answered, “and honestly and for our sweet cousin’s sake.” She looked at me with her soft, dark eyes full of gratitude.

When taking leave, I said to Elsie:

“The trial of your courage is just begun, and the worst is that I can do little to help you. This villain means to press matters, and up to a certain point, which



I trust will never be reached, I must stand aloof. He shall not persecute you. I would not alarm your fears, but he is a desperado, I doubt not, a *bravo*. He knows we are affianced. He saw, no doubt, our hands joined by your uncle and heard his prayer for a blessing on our union. And still he proposes to press his suit."

"Yes, Felix," answered Elsie bravely, "and he knows that you saw him eaves-dropping. He means to *defy* you. He has lived long among men of violence, and I have little doubt that his purpose is to seek a quarrel with you. I would not have you do anything not manly and brave, but trust you will avoid any trouble with him, since he will have you at a disadvantage, having no stake here, no reputation to maintain."

Her voice and manner as she spoke of this grave, possible exigency, surprised me. What she said had already occurred to me, and strong man as I was, conscious of possessing a disposition naturally fearless, I could but feel a degree of trepidation at the possibility that I might be driven to a personal collision with Costo. And notwithstanding the stringent laws then, as now, existing against the duel, every man was expected to resent promptly a proffered insult, and was inevitably disgraced, if not professing as a religious tenet, the doctrine of non-resistance, he tamely submitted. This Elsie knew, for her uncle, one of the kindest of men, was yet a believer in the old methods, and had, in his younger days, so it was said, resorted to them to settle difficulties. I was very proud of my darling, now that she bravely confronted what I had feared would, if it arose, terrify her, and so greatly embarrass me. I thanked her again and again, assuring her that nothing short of the direst necessity should move me to lay this further burden upon her loving heart.

Naturally impressible, my spirits rose and fell with the varying moods of Elsie. I had been as much cast down as herself, when she had spoken so despairingly of her dreams and the foreboding they had inspired. But as I walked homeward now, there was a glad song in my heart.



## CHAPTER XIII.

COL. TOWNSHEND GIVES SOME GOOD COUNSEL. COSTO'S  
WOOING. FELIX AS EAVESDROPPER.

My partner was "a Virginian of the old school;" a believer therefore, in many things now happily obsolete, but which in the day of their prevalence served high purposes, and conduced as nothing else could then have, to social order and decorous deportment. I felt myself nearing a point at which I should stand in need of his experience and wisdom. I hastened, therefore, to lay before him what the reader knows. He heard me through, thoughtfully, meantime walking the floor.

"Is there any question in your mind as to the identity of this man?" he asked, turning upon me with an anxious expression of countenance. I assured him there was none, detailing the interview with Cooney, showing that he had recognized the stranger.

"That settles it!" he exclaimed. "I might doubt your sweetheart and yourself, Felix, but no lawyer would for a moment doubt the evidence of this simpleton. The stranger, Costo, is no doubt your Otto Castelar, and none other."

"Well?" I queried.

"Then," proceeded the Colonel, all aglow with interest, "there are three hypotheses, as the lawyers say; first, the coming of the fellow here is, so far as related to matters affecting you and yours, accidental—chanced; or second, he has come with designs toward Miss Cradock, as it appears he knew that she had been brought here, but without thought of your presence; or, third, he is here with full knowledge of the situation, knowing of your presence, and with the purpose to *defy* you, as your wise little girl has said."

"Have you seen Mr. Costo?" I asked.

"Oh, yes, he has been here with Mr. Mansard, for whom, as you know, I have a business affair in hand.



A very bright man he is, too. He says he has been a regular student of the law, and talks intelligently on the general subject. His manners are perfect, and but for *something*, I know not what it is, I have seen it in a few other faces in my time; but for this indescribable something—is it in the eyes?—he would be the most superbly handsome man I have ever seen,” was the elaborate answer.

“What is your advice, remembering that next to the protection of Miss Cradock from annoyance, and the preservation of my self respect, I most desire to avoid collision with this stranger?” I questioned.

The brave old lawyer looked grave and thoughtful, rubbing his brow and looking at the floor, as his manner was, when in perplexity.

“Let him be the aggressor,” he said, “and when the exigency arises, if you have doubts as to what you ought to do, come or send to me. Only be careful to place him, or what is better, let him place himself clearly in the wrong.”

“Why, Colonel,” I cried, “he has already done that. He eavesdropped a most solemn interview between Elsie and myself and her dying uncle. He knows I saw him, and yet he impudently thrusts himself upon me, and intrudes himself into the very household whose inmates he offended by the vile act.”

I had grown warm as I proceeded, and the Colonel interrupted:

“But you can take no notice of that now; it is too late.”

“I can drive him from the house!” I answered.

“It is not your house,” he replied.

“I can lay the matter before Mrs. Downs, and take her commission to do it,” I argued.

“Ah, there it is; you will so put yourself in the position of picking a quarrel with your *rival*,” urged my adviser.

“Great God!” I cried. “My rival; my *rival*! and for the love of an angel! The very thought sickens me! It would surely drive Elsie mad, if she heard you say this!”



"Well, well," answered the Colonel, coolly, not seeming to appreciate my outburst, "that may be; but Miss Elsie and her hot headed lover will both be older, by and by."

And then presently, continuing:

"Suppose you sit down now, and look at this matter sensibly, if you can. Come, you are not at all like yourself, young man. Remember, a young fellow in love with a pretty girl—an angel—is no Daniel come to judgment; no Solomon in wisdom when at his coolest; and the voice of all history proclaims him no better than a madman when he suffers himself to get excited and lose his head. And somehow, love is like strong wine; when a fellow imbibes a goodly quantity of either, he is easily thrown off balance. Now, you go out in your present frame, and in less than twenty-four hours, you'll be fighting a duel. Remember," he went on, "this stranger, according to your story, has loved Miss Cradock as long as you have. And may not a man avow his love to the object of it? Aye, and press his suit? True, Miss Cradock has (and I shall still venture to think wisely, though I am not so sure of that as I should have been yesterday) yielded her heart and hand and happiness into your keeping. But this stranger was not a party to the arrangement, and very naturally supposing he knows of it, does not feel bound by it. Now you have driven me to say all of this; for I must bring you to your senses.

"But seriously," he still went on, "the thing I fear is, that he will not behave in good faith in the matter, but will, when he fails, seek a quarrel with you. Now, sir," he concluded, "do you appreciate the situation?"

"I think I do," I answered, a little crestfallen. But I thanked him for setting the matter forth in this, to me, new light.

I endeavored to pursue my studies and to prosecute my work, but found my mind too full of other thoughts, so gave up the effort.

What was I to do for the rest of the afternoon, if I did not go to Elsie? She met me with an anxious look in her face.



"Did you meet my messenger?" she asked, eagerly.

"Your messenger, Elsie? Did he bear a message for me?" I answered, quite as eagerly.

"Yes, look at this," she said, handing me a package, with the seal broken. And as she did so, I observed that her hand trembled.

I could scarcely summon courage to look at the contents, but stood gazing at the superscription. I think I should have known it at once for the handwriting of Costo. It looked like himself—large and somber and vigorous! Looking from this to the face of Elsie, I saw she was watching me warily. She was impatient at my reluctance.

"Please read it, Felix," she entreated.

I sat down, snatched the note from the envelope, opened it and read, and as I did so, I grew dizzy, so tumultuous were the movements of my blood. And this is what I read:

"MISS CRADOCK:—You cannot, I am sure, be ignorant of the fact, though I greatly fear that you are indifferent to it, that my several visits at the house of your aunt, have had no other object than to see you. Still you have ungraciously absented yourself on each occasion. By your permission, I shall call this evening at 8 o'clock. You will not, surely you cannot refuse me the opportunity to see you. It is a little thing to grant, but of infinite moment to him who asks the boon.  
COSTO.

"January 28."

I looked at Elsie. Her eyes were plainly crying: "O what shall I do?"

"See him," I answered. "The ordeal is inevitable; why not meet it now?"

"O Felix," she cried, "if I had but the courage of yesterday! But alas! I am quite unnerved—a coward now."

"Ah, poor child," I said, caressing her, "you have had disturbing dreams again."

"Yes, O yes!" she whispered.

"Dismiss all thought of them, Elsie. You have suffered your mind to dwell so much upon these hateful visions, that you are grown morbid and fearful. Dismiss them, pray. Be as on yesterday, my own brave heroic darling," I entreated.

"Will you remain, Felix?" she whispered.



"Yes," I answered, "but not to be present; that would simply postpone the ordeal, and protract your agony. Let us be done with it. He is a heathen to press this interview now, so soon after the death of your dear uncle; but being a heathen he will be satisfied with nothing short of an interview."

"You will remain in the adjoining parlor, Felix. I will close the folding doors," she pleaded.

"What, and play the eavesdropper, like him, Elsie; would you have me do that?" I said.

"You would not be an eavesdropper, but a sentinel; my protector, remaining at my invitation. You must not refuse."

She said this with more spirit. "I shall obey you," I answered, "but I must not hear what may be said. I cannot consent to listen."

"*To every word!* Not one syllable must escape you! You must sit where the lightest utterance will be audible!" she commanded with flashing eyes, and lips compressed.

"You must," she went on, "be armed and ready to come to me; for I shall be no more secure than if instead of a man, he were a wild beast! Otto Castelar is a savage!" As she spoke his name, she shuddered, and the hand I held clutched mine.

"I will obey you, Elsie, darling. One lightest tap of your finger on the closed door, shall be sufficient summons."

"Very well; you had better murder me outright than leave me at the mercy of this dragon of every evil passion."

At this moment Hortense, looking more beautiful than ever, came in.

"What are my 'chillers' as Cooney calls you, talking about, and so gravely, too?" she questioned. I still held Costo's note. I looked at Elsie. "Yes, let Hortense see it," she answered. I handed it to her and watched her while she read. Her face grew darker, her eyes glistened as dark eyes will, when there is strong emotion beneath them, as she said:

"He's a fool! Pardon me, Mr. Munro—he's a fool;



a Samson with eyes plucked out, and the Philistines that did it, are his own evil passions."

"Sit down!" I cried; "sit beside me here, beautiful prophetess, and seeing you were so wise yesterday, tell us of the night, of the morrow, of the days that are to come. Here, Elsie, sit on this side. Let us hear what our sweet cousin, the sybil, has to say to her 'chillers.'"

I took a hand of each. "Seriously, Hortense, tell us what to do!" I said earnestly.

"There's but one thing to be done. Let Elsie meet this man and end matters," she answered; then after a pause, continued:

"Is Felix to remain with us, Elsie?" On learning that it had been so agreed, she went on: "It is well to have it so; Mr. Costo has a strangely contradictory character. Gentle and polite of speech and manner, yet I forever feel when in his presence that I should not be in the least surprised to see him suddenly strangle any chance passer-by. But what *does* all this mean? Are you quite sure you have never met him, nor seen, nor been seen of him, before?"

Fortunately Hortense did not wait for an answer to this pointed question, but went on: "Why, he speaks of you two as if he had known you all his life. O Elsie," she said, laughingly, "his love for you is something *awful!*" I saw my darling shudder again, but she asked eagerly:

"Suppose I see him and kindly decline his attentions; tell him of—tell him the truth; will he not desist?"

The idea that my affianced bride, whom I had sworn to protect, cherish and defend, felt compelled to consider gravely, whether she was to be safe from the importunity or worse, of a man professing to love her, maddened me.

"He must desist; he shall desist—confound him!" I cried. "If, after he has proffered his suit, and has your answer, he annoys or importunes you further I shall take matters in hand!"

"And get shot for your pains!" suggested Hortense.

"Ah, is that among the visions of the sybil?" I questioned, half jesting, half earnest.



"It needs no seeress to foretell that. One has only to see that scarred, and at times, savage visage, to know that your slightest interference will be met so," she answered.

I felt that what she said was true. I remembered too, that in all our boyish rencounters, he had gotten the better of me. Not that he had prevailed over me, in any decisive way, but somehow, it had always ended in my feeling that he had me at a disadvantage—as on the occasion when he challenged me to discharge his gun.

After a long silence, during which my mind had dwelt on these events, I said, and I suppose my manner and voice were changed; for both looked quickly at me: "Whatever the issue, my duty is single, plain and unavoidable, and trusting in my mother's God, I shall endeavor to meet it as shall become my father's son."

"Why, Felix, did you think we doubted you?" asked Hortense.

"No, no," I cried, "I was considering whether to doubt myself."

At half-past seven, I had taken my place in the parlor, divided by folding doors from the apartment in which Elsie was to receive her visitor. And I was armed. While maintaining, I think, a fairly calm exterior, my blood surged and poured like a furious torrent through all my veins and arteries. I could hear my heart beat, and at the moment was conscious of being an abject, helpless coward, and could no more have stood against the coming visitor, than I could have breasted the highest wave in a mid-ocean storm. For some minutes—I shame to write it—I seriously thought of stealing away. Was this caused by the thought, which I could not dismiss, that I was doing an unmanly thing, in preparing to hear, by stealth, a lover prefer his suit? I hope so. If not, then it is certain—and I have never ceased to remember it—that I am capable, in certain moods and exigencies, of becoming an abject coward. Are all men? I hope not.

The clock in the distant steeple is telling the hour of eight. At the fourth stroke—for I am counting—



the door bell rings in response to one vigorous, almost angry jerk. And did one tiny door bell ever before make such din? It seemed to beat against walls, to leap up stairways in angry bounds, invade nooks and alcoves and upper chambers, and then to come rolling back from the high ceilings, to hold a carnival in the lower halls; and at last, after an age of riot, it sang the plaintive, reverberating song of death, which all metallic sounds at last sing, but none ever like this, before. The door is opened, and the short, quick step of the servant is presently heard approaching, and behind this, a step, stately and measured; for Elsie had directed that the visitor be led directly to the parlor, now brilliantly lighted, and in the midst the cousins, Elsie and Hortense.

Suddenly I discover that by placing my eye opposite the point where the folding doors meet, I can see a large area of the room; for in closing them, either purposely or by chance, they had not been brought quite together. I am bending my gaze thither, when the tall, almost majestic form of Costo moves into the room. He bows gracefully to the young ladies, standing side by side, and then with a bearing that even in my frame, I can but admire, he approaches the two figures with extended hand. They receive him politely, and Elsie shows him to a chair, and herself sits down.

"Thank Heaven!" I cry in my heart, for she sits directly in the line of my vision with face toward me. Hortense excusing herself, quits the room.

At sight of the face of the visitor, all sense of trepidation, of fear, departs from me. The commotion of my blood subsides and in another minute I am as cool and self-possessed as the most indifferent chance spectator could have been.

The departure of Hortense is followed by what appears an embarrassed silence. Then the visitor turns gracefully about and looking into the sweet, grave face of the waiting girl says, in a voice so soft and gentle and withal, with such music in it, as made one feel that it had been attuned for wooing:

"I thank you, Miss Cradock, for your gracious conduct in granting this interview. I feared that it was too much to hope for."



He paused; Elsie had lifted her face toward his and sat with a strangely courageous, but gentle, light in her eyes. She appeared to neither invite nor forbid further speech. She simply waited silently.

"I have never hoped," he began again, "to deceive you. I never, for a moment, suspected that you did not, at once, see in me the fatherless, nameless, *Otto Castelar*."

There was a strange pathos in the accents of his voice now, and I could see that it touched the sensibilities of the silent figure opposite, as it did even my own.

"I think," he continued, "that Mr. Munro did not recognize me and does not yet quite believe that I am his old playfellow. Am I not right?" Elsie appeared to hesitate; but answered, directly:

"Yes, in part you are right."

"That is," said the visitor, "he did not, as you did, recognize me at once, but does now. And having recognized me, like all men, he thinks me a criminal, seeking disguise under a false name. The ladies—Heaven bless them—are more generous. They do not suspect a man on such slight grounds."

He said this in a lighter voice. Elsie answered:

"If Felix—pardon me—if Mr. Munro has any suspicions of the character mentioned, he has not spoken of them. He is, as you may recall, too generous to surmise evil of any one."

After a moment's pause, the visitor said in candid tones and as if he had been considering the matter:

"Yes, as I remember, he *was* a generous lad."

"He is no less, but even more so, now," Elsie answered.

"I think," proceeded the visitor, "that he very much desired at first to be friends with me. But two things forbade such relations between us. Shall I tell you what those barriers were?"

Elsie hesitated; I saw a look of perplexity in her face. It required some patience to brook this persistence; but she answered, not unkindly, but firmly:

"I cannot decline to hear, if you wish to speak of them, since they concern Mr. Munro."



He moved impatiently, but when he spoke, it was again, in those wonderful accents :

“ I saw that the moment he looked into my face, when with his father he came to carry me into your neighborhood, he discovered, under my dark skin, what my mother and a picture she always carried, had told me long before, that I was the image of that wicked man, who, giving me every lineament of his face, withheld all else, even his name. Even nature conspired against me before I was born, and to rebuke the wicked, marked the innocent. Ah, when I realized that this stranger lad had discovered the secret—though he knew little of its import then—which had gnawed at my heart from memory’s dawn, I felt as if I should fall upon and strangle him. I verily believe that nothing but his father’s presence saved him from my chagrin and anger.”

As he proceeded, his voice sank lower and at last melted into tears. I fancied I could see his great frame shaken by his emotions ; and now, as Elsie looked pityingly upon him, the tears glistened in her eyes. The silence was protracted and painful. Having dried his eyes, he turned and looked toward the fire brightly burning in the grate, and this brought his profile within my view, and there was, as imperfectly seen, an expression, which if not simulated, was one to stir pity in the most unfeeling heart. After sitting for some time so, his head bowed, he lifted his face toward the patient, waiting figure, and went on :

“ And then I was sent to school ; and one day Elsie (oh, pardon me, Miss Cradock, I have carried that dear name in my heart all the years, and could speak it only to myself), one day there came into that dark and forbidding room, a face—a wee, bright face, as beautiful as if just fallen from the skies, and it entered my poor hungry heart, and suddenly the world was radiant. Since that day I have wandered to the ends of the earth ; have delved in dark mines ; have suffered shipwreck, been left for dead in two massacres, but always in my heart, I have borne the image of that sweet face. But, alas ! on that first morning, I saw that Felix



Munro, the same lad who at a glance had detected the evidence of my spurious origin, already loved this bright-faced girl, and that she returned that love. Yes, children as both were, and I was but a child myself, it was plain that the little heart of each had been surrendered to the other, and was held by that other dearer than life. Oh, I did hate your Felix! Unmanly, causeless as was that hatred, I did hate him! I saw you in the forest together, lost, lost under circumstances and surroundings well calculated to terrify children of your years. But there you lay on a bed of grasses, perfectly happy; you with your head on his bosom, like a sleeping fairy resting on the bosom of a demi-god. If it had not been such a cowardly thing, I think I should have slain him then. But my heart revolted at a deed so dastardly. I saw you again in the woodland, near your home, on the eve of your departure to this city. I had no temptation to do then what Felix suspected. I was there simply in the hope that I might once more see your sweet face, before we went our distant ways. I rejoiced at your departure. It filled my heart with a great hope, the hope that absence would bring forgetfulness of your boy lover."

"Pray, Mr. Costo," cried Elsie, interrupting, "spare me! Say no more! Please, say no more! It can but pain you, as it pains me, to hear it. I ought not, I must not hear you further. Let me entreat you to say no more. It is vain. Not only has he my heart, but long ago I plighted Felix Munro my troth, as well you know." And she had risen and was looking with earnest entreaty into the face of the stranger. But he interrupted with more vehemence than ever:

"You shall hear me through, Miss Cradock! The vilest criminal is not interrupted in his plea for life. No judge is so cruel as to bid him pause. Please be seated, and hear me; in pity hear me."

Elsie sank back into the chair she had quitted and with an expression of pained resignation, waited.

"Patience and pardon," he resumed in those wonderful tones. "I am weak, helpless, as a giant in gyves," and he smote his forehead. But at length he went on:



"I said to myself, 'She will go to the gay city and will forget her boy lover, while I will go, achieve a fortune, and then in after years, will come, and laying it at her feet, will tell her of my love, a love that will have sustained me through all my struggles; and she will, aye, she must, learning all that I shall have done and suffered and hoped, accept the offering.' So inspired, I set forth. I threw away the hated name I bore. Choosing another, I said, 'I will make this name honored and feared.' I succeeded as you have learned from others, from one whose guest I am. On all the Pacific coast no name is more widely known, none more respected by the honest, or feared by knaves, than the name of 'Costo, the Fearless,' as the rude people there have named me. And now, I come, sweet vision of a thousand dreams, star of all my hopes, and lay this princely fortune and this surging sea of love at thy feet. Thou wilt not, thou mayest not, reject this honest, faithful offering! Surely, surely I have not hoped and dreamed in vain!"

As he uttered these passionate words, kneeling, he had seized the hand of the terrified girl. And seeing now the look of mingled terror and pity in her face, he cried bitterly:

"O murderess, you spurn my love! Aye, you do more, and what your fickle sex is not famed for doing, you spurn a fortune won for you through an agony of years, a fortune fit to endow a princess; curse you! You have heard my story, and yet in your face has arisen no look but pity. Accursed be your pity! I could bear your contempt—your hate, even, with some patience; your pity maddens me!"

By an almost superhuman exertion, the now thoroughly terrified girl had wrenched her hand from the grasp of the kneeling giant. He arose and barred her way to the door. I caught a glimpse of his face. Its aspect was awful. He confronted the shrinking figure and in a voice that froze my blood, said, in measured accents:

"I saw the dying join your hand with that of Felix Munro, and heard the prayer for your happiness. But



it shall not prevail! I summon here, now, every devilish fiend and fury of discord; invoke every curse that has severed plighted vows, ever from the beginning of time to this hour, to blight this love and prevent this hateful union. Vain fools that you are! If all these fail me, I shall find a way of my own!"

As he began this tirade, I sought my way in the darkness to the nearest door, leading into the corridor. Through this I passed. I could have opened the folding doors and appeared on the scene at once, but this would have placed me at a disadvantage, and I meant he should be at my mercy.

As he finished the cruel words and turned to quit the room, I confronted him. I stood in the door, ready to anticipate the slightest menacing movement of the towering fiend. He paused, looking immovably at me.

"You have forgotten yourself, Otto Castelar—Costo, bastard, braggart, coward!" I cried. "You lay at the feet of an angel your accursed brutal passions, and call them by the holy name of *love*; and when that angel spurns your beastly, hateful offering, you turn, like the bully you are, and curse her! Down, you dog! and on your knees beg her pardon, or I will send your craven soul to keep company with the fiends you have invoked." And as I said this, looking him fiercely in the face, I held fairly against his breast, a cocked pistol.

He brushed me aside, as if I had been an infant, and strode past me and toward the door. In my rage, I was in the act of discharging the pistol into his retreating form, when a hand seized my arm, lowering the weapon, and the pleading voice of Elsie faltered:

"O Felix, do not kill the wretched man!"

He passed out, and in another moment Elsie fell fainting into my arms.



## BOOK III.

---

### CHAPTER XIV.

#### THE APOLOGY. THE DEPARTURE OF COSTO.

"He will challenge you before night," was the exclamation of Colonel Townshend, as I concluded, the next morning, a recital of the incidents set forth in the last preceding pages.

"I shall not fight," I answered. "I shall not violate the law and become a felon, simply to escape the charge of cowardice. But," and I spoke in such tone as caused my friend to halt in his walk up and down the office, "but I shall send such answer as will compel him to attack me on sight, and then—"

The Colonel rubbed his nose as his wont was, when not sure of his footing, and resumed his walk.

"He will not challenge, me, however," I added.

"What makes you think so?" asked my partner.

"He cannot afford to, and I fancy he knows it," I answered.

"If he shall, the course you propose will certainly lead to bloodshed," urged the Colonel, "whereas if you take the usual course of holding your correspondence across the State line, the matter will no doubt issue as such correspondence usually does, in an accommodation, to wit. And thus each will save his credit for courage with little risk of getting hurt."

There was evident irony in this speech, for my friend ended with a laugh, and an "Eh, Felix?"

"I make no boast of courage," I said, "for one can never be quite sure of his courage. But a principal



reason for declining to fight is the disgust I feel for the bluster, which in these late years attends this business. No, sir, I shall decline, but if Mr. Castelar—Costo—does not wish to fight—well—we shall see.” I ended so, for shame’s sake. The thought all at once made me shudder; the thought that I had contemplated a public quarrel, which must inevitably bring the name of Elsie into the gossip of idlers.

But at the moment Mr. Mansard walked into the office, looking very grave. Colonel Townshend glanced at me significantly. Having received our visitor cordially, we sat for some minutes talking in an embarrassed way, on general topics. While I was debating what I should do, now that I was confronted with the exigency respecting which I had just before had such decided opinions, the visitor arose and handed me a package, saying:

“Mr. Munro, I am bearer of certain messages from my friend and guest, Mr. Costo, who I regret to say, is quite ill this morning, but felt that he could not postpone the sending of these communications.”

The address was in the hand of Costo, but showed clearly that the nerves of the writer were shaken. I withdrew the sheet of note paper and read the contents eagerly. Surprise at once took the place of apprehension. The note ran thus:

“FELIX MUNRO, ESQ.

“*My Dear Sir:*—I write this because unable to come to you in person. Were I in your presence now, I should do what every instinct of my heart demands; go down on my knees and beg you to forgive the outrage, nay, crime, committed against, not yourself only, but against one justly far dearer to your heart, than your own life. I can only hope that one who, as a student of human nature, understands its infirmities, may be able to pardon even the gravest offence, and such mine surely is. My friend who will hand you this is bearer, also, of a message addressed in your care, to a lady whose name I am unworthy to write. You will examine it and determine whether she shall be troubled with a communication from one who, bearing the similitude of a man, is yet capable of such behavior as characterized my conduct in her gentle presence.

“Since you have, no doubt, as was proper, laid an account of last night’s affair, before your partner, will you do me the justice to allow him to see this? I know that I need not ask you not to add to my humiliation by giving the matter further publicity, though I deserve to have it blazoned to the whole world.

“I beg, in conclusion, to assure you, that if there were other words of which



I were master, that would more strongly convey my sense of regret, shame and humiliation, I should hasten to invoke their aid.

"Suffer me, dear sir, from the valley of shame and remorse, to subscribe myself

Your humiliated friend,

ROBERT COSTO.

"January 29 —."

When I had completed the perusal and had regained my breath, of which the missive had well-nigh deprived me, I asked, my partner meantime eyeing me anxiously:

"Are you aware of the contents of this note, Mr. Mansard?"

"Certainly, my friend read it to me," he answered.

"Then you are aware of the request, that if I had laid last night's affair before my partner I should also show him this note?"

And I handed the missive to the Colonel and watched him while he read.

Having finished it, with every indication of surprise depicted in his countenance, he passed it back, with the interrogative exclamation:

"Well?"

"Mr. Mansard," I began, "may I speak to you upon this subject, understanding what is said shall be deemed confidential? Or does your relation to the matter forbid?"

"We may so talk, at least, until I warn you," was the guarded answer.

"Very well, I wish to ask your opinion as to the state of your friend's mind. Is he at himself?"

"Why, you startle me, Mr. Munro, your inquiry amazes me!" he replied sharply.

"Then, it had not occurred to you that your friend's mind may be off its balance?" I suggested.

"Certainly not!" he answered, with a look of vexation.

"Tell him then," I went on, "that his communication shall receive fitting answer this day; but since in this mention is made of another, will you allow me to see that?"

"Really," began the visitor, in some confusion, "really, I beg your pardon; I thought I had handed it with the other."



It was addressed to Elsie on the inside, and while much briefer than the other, was even more abject. Having read it, I informed the messenger that I would lay it before Miss Cradock, and he took his leave.

"Felix," began my partner, "I do not quite understand your behavior. This apology would seem to be entitled to somewhat more cordial treatment than you award it. It is certainly frank and ample, if apology ever was."

"And yet, Colonel Townshend," I said, "it disturbs me more than a challenge to mortal combat."

"The devil!" he cried, "what do you mean?"

"Will you read this note again?" I questioned, handing it to him. "Read it in the light of my suggestion."

He did read it, slowly and thoughtfully, and then for a long time sat rubbing his nose and stroking his brow. At length, as if summing up the matter, he said to himself, but loud enough for me to hear:

"The question for resolution and opinion on these facts, are first: Is Mr. Costo a person of sound mind? And if yea, second: Is there anything sinister in this remarkable note—anything between the lines? Precisely, yes; such are the reasonable queries, on the facts stated.

"Say, Felix," he said, turning to me, "this fellow may be beside himself, but I don't believe it a safe assumption on the facts stated, and which I have just been running over in my mind. But whether he is crazy or sane, I agree with you in not liking the style and tone of this epistle. There is, what somebody calls a *muchness* about it, that alike challenges scrutiny and balks construction. Yet, there is but one thing for you, as a generous man and a gentleman, to do: respond to it as if there were no question of its *bona fides* and sufficiency."

"Thank you, my friend," I said, and forthwith I carried the matter to my Elsie and her wise cousin.

Elsie was pale and nervous this morning, but had come down in expectation of my visit.

Without intimating any opinion of the communications, I watched the two while they read them. Elsie



looked at me doubtingly. Hortense shook her head.

"Mr. Costo is masquerading," she said. "He is too humble by half—he is dangerously so."

"Have you told Hortense all that occurred last night?" I questioned.

"Not all; I did not feel at liberty to tell all," Elsie answered.

"And yet without knowing all, she has come to the same conclusion as yourself," I said.

"Yes, the same; these are intended for a snare. He means to cheat us," she said in suppressed accents.

"What shall I answer?" This was addressed to both.

"Say to him, for me—no, no; I must leave it all with you. Frame such answer as you think fitting," Elsie answered falteringly.

"Whatever else you say, let him know that you are not quite certain of the good faith of these extraordinary documents. No honest, no brave man could write such words as these, in his note to you, Felix." And then she added, laughing: "I know so much about brave men and honest men, and what they will or will not do! O I am sure I can't advise you."

"You have though," I said, "and I thank you for it. Remain here," I added, "until I return. I wish to submit what I may write to your judgments."

Going to the library, I indited the following:

ROBERT COSTO, ESQ.,

*Sir:*—Your messages by the hand of your friend have been considered. I trust you have discovered nothing in the character of either Miss Cradock or myself, leading you to suspect that an offence against us, can, in our estimation, be condoned, only by the self-abasement of the offender. We esteem it sufficient if the wrong-doer, sincerely regretting the error, says so.

We deplore the fact that you have deemed it necessary to employ language, which must be as humiliating to you as it is painful and distasteful to us.

We accept your assurance of regret that you were betrayed into conduct requiring an apology.

January 29.

Respectfully,

FELIX MUNRO.

As I finished the reading of this to the young ladies, Hortense shook her head again. Elsie looked disappointed.



"It does not satisfy either of you," I said.

"I confess it is not what I hoped to hear ; yet I cannot tell why," said Elsie, gravely.

"It lacks something ; heartiness?" suggested Hortense.

"I did not mean to be cordial ; but to let him see that to use words of self-abasement in apology, scarcely proves sincerity, and may excite distrust. I could wish that it better pleased you both, but it must suffice," I said. And the answer was dispatched.

\* \* \* \* \*

Within four weeks, and with the first boat that was able to make its way through the fragments of broken ice in the river, Costo had gone, declaring to his host his purpose to return to the Pacific coast.

---

## CHAPTER XV.

"LOST! LOST!" "WITHIN THE GATES OF DEATH."

It is mid-April. The Winter lingering, had but recently taken his departure. But at last the sun, as if to make amends for his tardiness, is shining with unwonted warmth. And on this afternoon (it was the 14th of April as I shall forever remember) I had said to Elsie :

"Let us walk to the woodland and see if 'Moses and Annie' are come."

The eyes of my darling sparkled with joy as she hastened to get ready.

"And wont Moses and Annie be surprised when they learn our great secret?" she cried, as we bent our glad steps southward.

"We must bid them to the feast, after ; for, of course the little dears will not care to go to the great church among so many strangers," I answered, as, lifting the ungloved hand I held in mine, I kissed it many times.

"Besides," Elsie said, presently, and blushing a lit-



tle, "May day is a busy season, always, with this provident pair."

"O darling, mine," I cried, in exuberance of joy, "we shall be a thousand times happier than these on that blessed day." And taking her face between my hands, I kissed it, again and again, for there were none to witness.

Ah, if our lives had been destined to glide on thus; if this day, and the happy days of this new year had been the prophecy of the days and years to come to us, these memoirs had never been written; for my reader will agree with me that the events in the career hitherto, of those concerned therein, are much too common-place, standing alone, to have risen to historic dignity. But, alas! these events stand as *oases* on the borders of a parched and ever-widening desert, the paths through which, led our feet over rugged stones, but through streams of living water, never.

O, blessed days of that year, from thy high places we saw (Elsie and I), in our happy, but illusive day-dreams, paths leading into strangely beautiful fields, filled with all manner of trees, "which yield their fruits twelve times a year." We saw, too, the glad faces and happy feet of children hastening along flower-begirt paths to meet us; saw these, grown into glorious perfection, bearing our names to the future, teeming generations.

On thy heights, O glorious springtime, we heard songs which no voice could utter, and with uplifted eyes saw, as in the mountain of God, other and greater heights; and on these, multitudes no man could number; and clasping hands, we cried, "We will by the paths, through the fruitful valleys, together, walk thither."

"For," we said one to the other, "yon heights are reached through the beautiful vale." For we were very happy and stood on the mountain of Hope where poets live, and sing their wonderful songs. But we knew not what we said.

As I took leave of Elsie, in the twilight of this evening, she said, softly:



"Remember Felix, darling, meet me at the river at precisely six o'clock."

"Never fear, sweetheart," I answered, "do you need to bid twice a beggar to the feast?"

In the visions of that night the robins sang as they built their nests in the woodland, through which I walked with an angel, that forever struggled to leave me, and the flight of which I diligently sought to stay, but at last could not.

A brief explanation which cannot be more irksome to my reader than to myself, is here necessary.

Across the river opposite the city, lived a poor woman with an invalid daughter. This widow had for many years, been housekeeper at the Downs mansion, but growing old and infirm had, two or three years before, been retired from service. Mr. Downs had builded a cottage for her and had provided for her out of his bounty. A small boat, and christened "Elsie," lay in the river at the foot of the broad street, for the use of those of the family who carried supplies to the inmates of the cottage. Since the death of the uncle, Elsie had taken this duty on herself. Three evenings each week she went to look after these helpless people. On several of these visits lately, I had accompanied her. The simple Cooney always went along to work the oars, and to carry the provisions from the boat to the cottage. It was to accompany her on such a visit, that I had agreed to meet her at six o'clock on the evening following that of our visit to the woodland.

An unforeseen engagement prevented my keeping the appointment. For the first time in my experience the court wherein I was engaged, chanced to continue its session beyond the hour of six. *Chanced?* Ah, me! Who shall say?

At the appointed hour, Elsie, with her faithful servitor, was at the trysting place. This I learned from the dwellers along the river; and I further learned that she awaited me many minutes, but at length set forth in the little boat.

So soon as the court adjourned, near 7 o'clock, I walked rapidly to the mansion; for I was much annoyed



at my failure to keep my engagement, and was eager to make my excuse. Hortense told me that Elsie had started on time, but had not returned; and though she endeavored to conceal the fact, I saw that on learning that I had not accompanied Elsie, she was alarmed. For the hour at which she had started was later than her custom was to go, when she had only Cooney for company. A horse and buggy was brought, and in less than five minutes I was on my way to the river.

When we came in sight of it, at the end of the wide street we saw Elsie's carriage at its accustomed place. I knew not why, for as yet there was no serious ground of alarm, apparent, but suddenly my heart fainted within me.

"What means this awful premonition?" I asked.

But the driver answered not, for he knew that I questioned myself.

When we reached the river, it was quite dusk. I strained my eyes in eager hopes that I might see the little boat with its precious freight; but in vain. I sent the driver up the river to a point where lay skiffs and row-boats, to fetch one. It seemed an age before I at last saw him coming around the bend. So soon as the boat was near enough, I leaped into it.

"Pull to the western shore! Pull for your life!" I cried to the boatman. But when we reached that side, no boat was visible. I flew to the cottage. Elsie and her companion had left there an hour ago. I flew back, crying:

"Lost! Lost! Lost!"

We returned to the other side, and having directed the driver to go and give the alarm, we headed down stream. I besought the boatman to make all possible speed. He assured me he was doing his best. I seized the oars. The boatman yielded his place. My strength appeared superhuman. The trim little vessel fairly leaped along the water.

As we went onward, I looked from side to side, in eager search. I hallooed; I cursed; I called on all the powers in Heaven, in the air, on the earth and beneath it, for aid; but ever I bent to the oars. On and on the



boat flew. Where was I going? Oh, God, in search of certain evidence, certain proof, that my darling was lost! for I sought an empty boat. I had no hope that Elsie would be in it, if found.

Vain search!

I know not how long I had been working the oars, when the boatman touched my shoulder. I looked up into his face. He was frightened; but he said in kindly tones:

"Let me have the oars, please; you are exhausted, Mr. Munro."

I yielded and he turned the boat about, and leaving the current, started back. I said not a word in protest. There began to steal over all my senses a numbness like congestion. I sat watching the gliding waters as a child might. The time seemed endless. Would we never come in sight of the lights of the city? Thus, dreamily, my mind pondered.

At length we saw a boat, bearing a light, and containing other vain searchers. The boatman hailed these and they turned about. We met others, and they turned back. All were abandoning my helpless darling to her fate, but I said not a word!

When we reached the wharf, hundreds were assembled, but doing nothing. Lying near was a small vessel with steam up. This I chartered and sent in search of the lost boat—not of Elsie; that I knew was vain. But her boat if found, might give some clue.

It was near midnight when the little steamer started. All sorts of rumors were flying about as to when and where Elsie and her companion had been last seen. These I followed up; but all I learned, the reader already knows.

When Elsie had arrived at the river at 6 o'clock, she waited, some said twenty minutes, some said longer. No one pretended to have seen her start on her return voyage.

One other fact only, I learned: a small vessel that had some days before brought from the Ohio River a cargo, and which had been lying at an abandoned landing, down the river, had shortly after Elsie crossed



over, steamed up the river and, some said, presently returned to its moorings. It was suggested that the people of this boat might know something of Elsie's movements. But my mind was benumbed, so I did not as at another time I might, prosecute inquiry in that quarter.

Hour after hour I walked the river's brink, awaiting the return of the little steamer I had sent out. Preparations were going forward to drag the river at the rise of morning. But I took no interest in this. Nor could I have told why.

I remembered that in Elsie's girlhood, and after her peril in the creek, she had been taught to swim (as every girl ought to be), but what could that avail her in this raging flood?

And now in the agony of despair, I began to call upon her name, as one bereft. I implored her by the memory of our love, wherever in the universe she might be, to come to me. If but for one moment, to come and vouchsafe one smile of her gentle face, to assure me that she had survived the flood.

"I will be patient, darling," I cried, "if I know that thou still livest, and that we shall meet again."

I had unconsciously said this aloud, while wringing my helpless hands.

"He is mad!" they said. "He will do himself violence," suggested the gossips. "He should be looked after by the authorities; he will throw himself into the river," said others, who no doubt would have enjoyed the added sensation.

And then, I remember, there came about me, grave, pitying, tearful faces, and gentle voices expostulated and endeavored to reason with me. And beyond these I dimly remember other faces; curious, unpitying, tearless, with ogling eyes, filled with eager looks, such as are seen at the execution of a felon.

And then my ears were invaded by mingled, indistinguishable sounds, which waxed louder and louder, ending at last in a roar, as if the heavens and the earth had met and chaos come again! Balls of fire, which swelled until they burst as bubbles burst, filling all the spaces



with shooting stars and blazing brands, were before my eyes; and then—

\* \* \* \* \*

When consciousness began to dawn again, I was in darkness. My first sensation was that of suffocation.

“I have been buried alive!” I thought, my senses quickening at the reflection.

I endeavored to lift my hand to feel about me, but it failed to respond to my impotent will. I tried to draw my feet upward; I could not move so much as a toe. I essayed to speak, but my vocal organs at this first trial, were as unresponsive as if they had not been my own. With a feeling of despair, I attempted to move my tongue, my lips. I succeeded. What a sense of triumph I felt!

Again I essayed speech, and as if by chance, I articulated the name, “Elsie.” I had no purpose to do so. *I had no purpose*; I do not remember that I had thought of her.

Had I been possessed of sufficient sensibility and life, I should have shuddered at the sound of my voice; of *the* voice rather—it was not mine. I had never heard this voice before.

I experienced a mental surprise, that was all, as a well man might, who suddenly sees or hears a wholly unexpected thing, but a thing indifferent to him, save as it is unique.

I tried again:

“Elsie!”

The same voice responded. And now my mind took its first tottering step, very leisurely:

“Who is Elsie?”

But just then there glided to my bedside, in the darkness, a figure like a specter, for only the dim outlines were visible. And then a voice, like something I had heard in ages past, and in another world, said, softly:

“Mr. Munro—Felix, did you speak?”

But my mind was occupied again, with the thought that I could, at least, move my tongue, and again I made the effort:



"Elsie!" answered the unearthly voice.

And again, I began the same mental process as before :

"Who is Elsie?"

And I was saying mentally :

"Ah, I remember!"

When the gentle voice, now nearer my face, said, pityingly, but I did not think of that then :

"Ah, no, no, Felix; not your Elsie; Hortense."

"Hortense!" echoed the voice. And again I asked, mentally :

"Who is Hortense?"

But now the figure draws aside the curtains of a window, ever so little, but a ray of light struggles in, and the moment it touches my eyes, closes them as if, instead, it had been a lurid flash of lightning. The curtain is replaced, and before the figure can bend over me again, I have fallen into profound sleep, from sheer exhaustion.

Many times, as afterward I learned, this struggle between consciousness and night, life and death, was repeated; but at each struggle consciousness and life won a little on night and death. And each time the struggle began by the strange voice uttering the one same word—the name "Elsie," and each time the same form glided to my bedside and bent over me, while the same gentle voice answered my speech with eager questioning.

I had grown stronger when I awoke one day, with an infinite yearning in my heart, to see Elsie. It seemed to have grown in my soul while I slept, for it was the first thought or sensation on awaking. No recollection of the awful past came with this longing, which was like a consuming hunger. I did not think of calling her, but, unconsciously I did :

"Elsie—darling!"

Instantly the figure was at my side, bending over me, the face so near mine that I could feel its warm breath. The amount of light allowed in my room had been gradually increased until now I could see the face near my own in mere outline. I lifted my arms, for I



had gained strength to do so now, and encircled the neck of the bending figure, drawing the face down to my own, when the voice, low and eager, said:

"It is not Elsie, Felix dear, it is not your Elsie. It is Hortense."

Then kissing my brow gently, she drew back.

"Where is she? Please tell me where my darling is," I said so piteously, pleadingly, that Hortense answered with a sob.

Then slowly my mind recalled the past. I remembered that Elsie had been lost—remembered it dimly, not poignantly, that would have killed me. The girl continued to weep as I looked into her face, awaiting an answer. But now I said:

"I remember!"

"Oh, do you remember, Felix?" cried the low, eager voice.

Then there was silence. But my mind was gathering the broken threads of memory.

"It has been a long night, Hortense; is it morning now?" I at length said.

"It is evening now," she answered.

Then another silence.

"What day of the month is this? My mind is so confused I cannot recall?" I asked.

"This is the twenty-fifth," she answered.

"No, no, Hortense," I answered, after some time, "that is not right, I remember now. Yesterday was the fifteenth, for I recollect saying to Elsie in the woodland—ah, what was it I said to Elsie, in the woodland?"

Hortense was silent so long that I grew impatient. And then began to gather in my mind a suspicion.

"Why am I so weak?" I asked myself.

I looked at the face of Hortense again. It was full of an anxious, frightened look.

I lifted my right hand and gazed at it. It was a skeleton hand! At sight of this it fell back into its place, as if paralyzed, and I turned such a look upon Hortense as caused her to tremble. She arose, and glided from the room.



My mind was now invaded by a strange feeling of awe.

"I have been within the gates of death!" I whispered.

I raised my hand again slowly, and felt my face. It was *fleshless*! I passed it up to my head—it was *shorn*!

Hortense glided again into the room, and again sat by my bed. But I became aware that she had been followed, on her return, by some one who remained at a distance.

Poor girl! She had become alarmed, and had gone to summon an attendant.

I slept for a time and when I awoke again my mind was more acute. I did not call Elsie's name now, but in a voice far more natural than at any former time, I called:

"Hortense!"

It was night, but in a minute she had come from her room and was at my side. She administered some nourishment, what would have scarcely sufficed for the tenderest infant, then drawing her chair near, sat down.

"Where am I, Hortense?" I asked.

"You are in—don't you know? You are in *our* house—Aunt's house."

I looked slowly about me. All was strange.

"Is this my room?" I questioned.

Hortense hesitated a moment, and then, in a voice choked with emotion, answered:

"It is *her* room; we thought you would like it when you—got better."

"What day is this?" I asked presently again.

Again she hesitated, seeing which, I said slowly:

"Has it been long, Hortense? Tell me, please."

"Yes, Felix," she answered. "You have been very ill a long time. This is the twenty-fifth of May." And she looked at me as if expecting to see me greatly surprised. But I was not. I closed my eyes and lay so quiet, that she thought me asleep. I was thinking.

"Elsie would have been my wife now, many days," I said at last.

Suddenly there flitted through my mind the merest



figment of a recollection. I could make nothing of it, but it led me to ask :

“ Have I been here all the time ? ”

“ All the time, from the day you fell ill. ”

She could not tell what I long after learned, that I had been in a *madhouse* for two weeks, and until brain fever had set in, when she, herself, first implored and at last commanded that I be removed to the home of my friends. And having prevailed, would hear to nothing only that I should be lodged in the rooms of my lost Elsie.

Slowly my strength returned. Slowly with its return, my mind gathered up the fragments and strands of memory, and knitted them patiently together.

Well was it that all this must be done, little by little ; else I had died. Well it is, that one, coming back from the borderland 'twixt life and death, comes with sensibilities blunted, else I had surely died, or lost, again, my reason.

It was not until after many days, that my mind laid firm hold of the fact that Elsie's death was shrouded in mystery. I had a vague sense that she was lost, but my mind was not daring enough to go beyond this. At last I began to reflect : “ What has been learned of this dark and awful mystery ? Has the boat been found ? Has the body been recovered ? ”

I came to feel a shivering sense of terror at the bare thought of making any inquiry. An hundred times a day I would resolve to ask Hortense, but as often as I resolved, an indefinable sense of dread of what I might learn, kept me silent. That the worst awaited me, I was sure ; or why the ominous silence of every one ? Why do all avoid every topic which might lead to this one ? And why the look and manner of Hortense, so full of gentleness toward and sorrow and pity for me, when I had spoken of Elsie ? Ah, me !

One day I had slept long and awoke, greatly refreshed. Hortense sat, holding my hand and looking sorrowfully into my face. Without waiting for the sense of dread to arise in my soul, I suddenly cried :

“ O Hortense, sister, tell me ; have you no word of



comfort, nothing to give me just one little ray of hope?"

She shook her head sadly.

"Have they not even so much as recovered the body?" I asked, my heart dying within me.

Again she shook her head as the tears ran down her face.

"Have they sought for it? Have they tried to recover it?" I persisted.

"By every known method, diligently, for weeks," she said softly, as she stroked my face soothingly.

I groaned in an agony of despair, but pursued the inquiry no further, though somehow, I felt that the patient Hortense knew more than she had told.

---

## CHAPTER XVI.

### COONEY AND HIS STORY. THE DESPAIR OF FELIX.

It was after many days, and I was able to sit up in an easy chair and look out on the flowers and at the distant forests, when Colonel Townshend came in. Not that this was his first visit, for no day passed without his calling to inquire after me. He was a straightforward man. I had often envied him his ability to communicate the most disagreeable intelligence without any air of discouragement; a rare gift. He drew up a chair and took my still attenuated hand, saying:

"I have come to have a little talk with you this morning. Are you strong enough to listen, for you must not talk back—I will not allow that. I have nothing worse to tell you than you already know or surmise."

"O sir," I cried, "you cannot have. There is nothing worse possible! There is no horrible thing that could befall, that I have not dwelt upon, until I have sweat, as it were, great drops of blood. Go on!"

"There, you have made a longer speech than mine, already; and you were not to talk at all," he said soothingly.



"Go on, pray," I repeated, beginning to feel an insupportable longing to hear what he had to say.

He went on rapidly, but without that mysterious air that makes bad news appear worse:

"The little steamer you sent out that night, found the lost boat—Cooney's boat, as I shall call it—eight miles below the city, in a bend in the river, near the island. A week later a rumor became current, that a silly fellow had wandered to a cabin in the bottoms, where he had told a wonderful story. I caused this rumor to be followed up, and it turned out as I had suspected, that the simple fellow was Cooney. I went myself and brought him home."

"O," I cried, interrupting, "do not keep me in suspense! It will kill me! Is she alive? For sweet pity's sake, tell me, she is *alive*!"

The eyes of the good man swam in tears, as he went on bravely:

"Felix, my son, you know I would not keep you in suspense. You know if such an assurance could be given, it would have been, long ago. You must have patience. Hear me through; and then you and I, who have solved so many knotty problems, will work on this."

These words look simple enough to the reader, no doubt; but at hearing them, everything grew misty before my eyes; even the form of my friend danced and quivered, and at last disappeared in darkness, as ten thousand bells jangled in my ears.

When I revived, the blood had mounted to my face and my mind became strangely alert.

"Go on, I am better now; go on quickly," I said.

"It required many hours," my friend continued, "to get from the simpleton all the facts, so that I could put them together and make an intelligible whole, of them; for his powers of speech are well nigh gone, as are those of his mind. But the story, briefly told, is this:

"When they started to return across the river, they saw a small vessel which lay down at the old landing, steam up the river directly across their path, and then turn and drop down again, so that when Cooney, with



his boat, was about half across, the little steamer lay *in* their pathway. Then suddenly, three men were seen coming from the steamer in a skiff. When alongside, two of the men jumped into Cooney's boat, knocked him down, took his oars and ran the boat toward the steamer. Miss Cradock gave a frightened scream, when one of the ruffians seized her and bound over her mouth a handkerchief, telling her that she should not be harmed, but that it was useless to make resistance.

"By this time Cooney's boat was lashed to the steamer, which was going at great speed down the river. Miss Cradock was soon removed onto the steamer, when one of the men, presenting a pistol at Cooney's breast, commanded him to lie flat down and to keep quiet. This so frightened the poor fellow that he lay quietly on his back, fearing to move hand or foot. The man had carried Cooney's oars on to the steamer, but before doing so had inspected the chain by which the little boat was fastened to the steamer. This chain, as you will recall, was fastened to the prow by means of a padlock. It seems not to have occurred to the man who inspected it, that his prisoner, Cooney, might have the key to this lock. But he did have it, and seeing the man make the examination, reminded him of the fact. It was some time however, before he could persuade himself to abandon Miss Cradock; but it at last dawned on his infirm mind that if he could make his escape, he might serve her better than he was likely to, while a captive like herself. But his feet were toward the prow, and he feared that a movement would lead to his detection and as he supposed, instant death. Slowly, however, he worked about until, lying prone, he was able to reach the lock. But as it had not been unlocked for a long time, the escutcheon or guard over the key hole was immovable from rust. By means of the key he was enabled to wrench this off, and in another moment he had dropped the chain into the water and the steamer glided away. But Cooney soon saw that his escape had been discovered, for he heard great commotion on board, and saw that the vessel had stopped.



"In another moment he saw a small boat carrying lights, start in search of him. Knowing that he had no oars, the searchers supposed that his boat would drift helplessly down the current, which was swift; for it happened to be near the island, and where the larger volume of water flows around on the west of it, in a comparatively narrow channel. But fortunately the waves started by the steamer, not only retarded the speed of Cooney's boat, but gradually drifted it toward the western shore. Seeing that they were in search of him, and inspired by the peril, or acting from instinct, he tore one of the plank seats loose, and by means of it carried the little boat out of the channel. But for some reason the search was soon abandoned, and the little steamer started on.

"Cooney has little recollection of how he got ashore or his movements afterward. He was probably lost in the heavy forests; for it was the evening of the second day before he made his appearance at an obscure cabin, the inmates of which are scarcely more intelligent than himself, and could make nothing of the story he tried to tell them."

"And this is all you have to tell me?" I said. "And you have done nothing to pursue and capture the kidnappers?"

"On the contrary, we have done everything. The boat of the kidnappers was found fifty miles below the mouth of our river, in the Ohio, and has been brought back for identification. But when found, there was not a soul aboard, nor anything giving any clue whatever.

"No doubt the boat is the one which a week before arrived here with a cargo, and lay at the old wharf that evening. But the former name has been painted and cut out, and the significant one of 'The Fugitive' has been painted over the old."

"Is this all? O, you tell me so much, and yet so little!" I groaned.

"Mrs. Downs," he continued, as if I had not interrupted, "on the return of Cooney, at once put in my hands ten thousand dollars, while Miss Parté has placed her entire fortune at my disposal. I have sent detec-



tives across the plains and others by ship, to California; but we must be patient."

"Patient!" I cried, struggling to rise. "Patient! O, cursed be my coward heart! Oh, God, Thou knowest how to punish a craven! I would not slay him when he challenged, nay mocked death at my hand! I weakly, and like a coward, let him escape these sinewy hands, and Thou hast withered them! I disobeyed every impulse of manly courage, every dictate of prudence, and let this *fiend* escape; and now (Thou art a just God!) Thou 'laughest at my calamity.' Thou hadst implanted in my heart, as Thou hast in the meanest brute beast, the holy instinct of self-preservation, and didst endow me with power to execute its high behest, but like a damned craven, when I held as in the hollow of my hand, his vile life, I pitied and would not slay him, because forsooth, he bore the image of Thy Son; though he had sworn in my very face to undo and wreck my life. O, let all the thunderbolts of Thy just indignation fall upon, that they may annihilate me, soul and body; a spirit so craven is unfitted for the joys of heaven, and too insensate to suffer any pang in hell!"

"O, Colonel Townshend," cried Hortense, coming in, "the poor fellow is mad. Alas! I feared this."

But I was not mad; and realizing the anxiety of my friends, for Colonel Townshend looked ready to cry, I was ashamed of my weakness and of the passion into which I had suffered myself to fall. I sank exhausted, into the chair from which I had half arisen.

"Felix," began the Colonel solemnly, his voice shaken, "you acted as became a man of your principles and Christian training, and this yielding by you now to such awful passion, ill becomes you. You have been very ill, or certainly you would not behave so and alarm your friends."

"O yes," I cried, overwhelmed at the thought, "O yes! I have been ill. But what right had I to fall ill and forget the world—forget her—leave her to be carried away? Ah, think you, if *he* had been in my stead and I in *his*, *he* would have fallen ill? No, no; in less than five hours he would have invoked the pow-



ers of the State against me. He would have compassed sea and land. He would have laid all, the earth, the sky—heaven—hell under tribute, to aid him in searching me out! Single handed he would have pursued me into the very gates of perdition, though I had been flanked and followed and aided by a thousand legions of devils! He would have driven me to suicide to escape his avenging hand!

“O my God! Do not shame me to death by reminding me that I *fell ill*, when my soul should have been above every earthly infirmity. The consciousness that *her* heart and hopes turned, in captivity to me (for I ought to have known she had been kidnapped) were enough, had I been worthy of one thought from her, to have panoplied me against the powers of every plague which has smitten the earth since the dawn of time.

“O heart of mine, why wert thou not steel? Why faint, O boastful thing of flesh, of the earth, earthy? Why wert thou not adamant, in the hour of her imminent deadly peril—curse thee! Curse thee!”

I had risen now, and was staggering, like a drunken man, toward the door.

“O my mother’s God!” I cried, reeling along the room, “where wert Thou on that accursed day? Asleep? I thought Thou didst never sleep. Yet Thine eye could not have beheld this crime, and winked at it. Away with the faith of my fathers; cheating dogmas, all, that beguile, while they blind their devotees!

“This world, under whatsoever dominion other worlds may lie, is but a province, a dependent, an outpost of a Fiend—a Devil, in whose soul pity has no place, and in whose court, virtue and purity and maidenly innocence are a laughing stock!”

I had reached the door and was ready to fall, yet all my senses acutely alive, when I saw kneeling, with an uplifted crucifix, a Sister of Mercy, a faithful nurse through all the days and weeks of my struggle with death.

Her pure, white face, wearing a look of frightened pity, arrested me.



## CHAPTER XVII.

## A GHOST.

The story of the kidnapping of a young lady, was in those early days so rare that this one spread throughout the land. Not in a day, as later and at this writing, it would, but in the course of some weeks it had been reproduced in the newspapers far and near, shortly to be followed by the pitiful story of the supposed hopeless insanity and mortal illness of the girl's lover. And then came rumors and wild stories of the discovery of the stolen girl. Papers containing these, were faithfully brought to me by Colonel Townshend.

"Not that I have any faith in it, my dear fellow," he would say, as he came with a new one, "but one never knows. And if it should happen to give us a clue, you know." Not one of these was neglected, and as many as three were being followed up, when at last, about the middle of July, I was able to ride out with my friend in his carriage. I asked him to drive to the river.

There were two things there I wished to see; the one, the little row boat from which my darling had been stolen, and which lay, as of old, in its quiet moorings, gently swayed by the little waves, and looking as peaceful and serene as if it had not witnessed a scene which had stirred a million hearts and wrecked two lives—the happiest the earth had seen since the cherubim, with flaming sword, barred the gates of Eden; the other, the small steamer which had borne such diabolical part in that dark tragedy, and which lay now at the same landing from which, on that evening, it had started on its cruel errand.

By the aid of my friend and the watchman, I went aboard of and inspected the craft which had for me, such melancholy interest. Its cabin was finished in excellent taste, and the furniture yet remaining, was of finest quality. Still feeble, I sat down on a small divan



and leaned, with closed eyes against the wall, endeavoring to conjure up the face of my lost Elsie ; for since my illness I could only occasionally recall its image, and consequently forever found myself trying to do so.

Colonel Townshend, who made a point of talking with all manner of people, and so knew somewhat of every subject, had engaged the watchman in conversation in respect to the vocation of a fisherman, that having been the fellow's employment before he was set to watch here. The Colonel, it appeared, had curiously drawn his companion out, on the subject of the superstition of fishermen. The watchman was saying that they were all afraid to pass near *this* boat at night.

"Fishermen who have followed the business for long," he went on, "universally believe in ghosts and hobgoblins. Two of them that fish down the river, have been telling a powerful ghost story just lately. You know where the big island is, some miles below ? Well, there's a cabin on the island, where old Johnson, the deaf and dumb fisherman—and his wife's deaf and dumb, too,—lives. Well, sir, these fellows say and swear that they've seen a ghost there three different days ; the idea of seeing a ghost in the *daytime* ! But it's no use to laugh at them. They're in earnest and wont be joked about it. They swear they see it every time they pass there."

"I can well understand," said the Colonel gravely, "how people believe such things. I believe them myself."

"You !" cried the fisherman.

"Yes," answered the Colonel, "I have no doubt, on the evidence we have all the way along, that the spirits of those whom we reckon dead, have at times appeared to the living. Not that they make a business of it, but they do no doubt, occasionally."

This was more than the fisherman had bargained for, and he directly turned the conversation.

As we rode home, I asked, "Colonel, how far is it to the island ?"

He looked sharply at me, saying : "Why do you ask ?"



"I should like to go down there," I answered.

"Why, I thought you were asleep while you sat in the boat. You heard what the fellow said, did you?" he questioned.

"Yes," I answered, "and what you said. I agree with you; I, too believe in ghosts. So let us go. How far is it?"

"Yes, excuse me; it is eight miles by land, but near twenty by water," he answered.

"I don't want to go by river," I said.

"When shall we go?" he asked.

"To-morrow, starting directly after breakfast," I answered.

He endeavored to dissuade me, in which Hortense and her aunt seconded him; but on consulting the physician, that gentleman made no objection, but encouraged rather, the idea. A doctor and his patient, in such matter, are a majority, and the minority yielded.

I was restless and slept little, feeling that sort of nervous eagerness, I used, when a child to feel, on the eve of going abroad.

So when Hortense came to me after breakfast, saying that my friend awaited me in his carriage at the door, if I had consulted my judgment rather than my desires, I should have given over going.

The Colonel eyed me narrowly, as with some difficulty I mounted to my seat by his side. But we were soon riding over beautiful roads, through the green woods and by fields of ripening grain; and the odor of the country, always dear to the senses of one, rustic bred, revived and soothed me; and we were at the end of the pleasant part of the journey much too soon, I thought.

We had to leave the main road and traverse narrow lanes, quite two miles, to reach the river opposite the island, and a small part of the distance must be made afoot, for this region was wild and unreclaimed, like the island itself. Aided by my friend and Jack, the driver, I at last reached the river and was glad to sit me down and rest. After looking for some time at



the dark and forbidding aspect of the island, the Colonel said:

"If any fairly reliable person were to tell me that his Satanic majesty keeps his headquarters over there, I should believe it. I guess you don't care to go over, do you, Felix?"

I really did not, but having been in bad repute with myself for courage, in these last days, I determined that having come to inspect the island, I would not give it up, so.

"Yes," I said peevishly, "I care enough to do it."

"But how are we to get across?" questioned my friend, discouragingly.

"We must find a way. There are fishermen, with boats, around here, no doubt," I said firmly, and turning to Jack, I bade him go in search of them.

He soon returned, saying that he had found two fishermen, but they refused to take us over.

"Where are they? This is preposterous!" I cried, rising.

"Not a hundred yards away," Jack answered.

"Lead me to them," I commanded, starting.

"Why will you not take us across?" I asked, on reaching the fishermen.

"'Cause we're not 'bleeged to," was the impertinent answer.

"But I will give you a dollar if you will oblige us," I entreated.

The spokesman shook his head. I offered two—three—but he continued to shake his head.

"I will give you two dollars for the use of your boat," suspecting that these were the same who had seen the ghost. The offer was declined.

"My good man," I said, changing voice and manner, "why do you refuse to let us have your boat?"

"I aint got no other," he answered.

"But we will return it to you all right in an hour," I argued.

"But s'posin it gits *berwitched*, what 'count will it be but to give me trouble?" was the grave answer.



"You are a fool!" I cried in my impatience. "What is your boat worth?"

"Five dollar an' a 'alf," he answered, after due consideration.

"Bring it here, you idiot, and get your money," I said, drawing my purse.

He picked up the oars and as he pulled toward us, said, resentfully: "I aint no idiot, I aint. I guess I knows. I'se fished 'ere too many a yur, not to know suthin's mighty wrong on that ilen." And he looked askance at the island.

I paid him and as we got into the boat, he looked at it ruefully, saying, as he shook his head: "You's been a faithful ole boat to me, but you's done for now, I 'low."

Fortunately we reached the island at a point where there was an opening in the thick growth, which for most part formed a hedge about it.

When the water was low, the island comprised some thirty or more acres, and was long and narrow.

After resting for a little, and taking some wine, I felt equal to the task before us, aided as I was to be, by my companions, an arm of each of whom I held by.

"Let us go to the cabin of the mutes," I said as we started on.

"Do you know, Jack," said the Colonel, laughing, "what Mr. Munro came here to see?"

"A ghost," he went on, without waiting for answer. "Yes sir, a ghost, as if he didn't look enough like one himself." But as he said this he looked at me with an expression of pity; for he remembered. But I took no note further than to say: "All right, Colonel; but I think those simple fellows have seen something, and I want to learn what it is; for of course it is not a ghost."

I had no breath for talking, so we walked on in silence. I grew so tired that I suggested that we sit a minute on the convenient trunk of a fallen tree. I took more wine and we soon started forward again. The path was narrow, scarcely wide enough for two to walk abreast. But I could not surrender the arm of either of my companions, and so walked a little to the



rear, with my head bent. Suddenly something like a shudder appeared to shake Colonel Townshend from head to foot, and he stopped.

“Great God! What is that?” he gasped.

I looked up at his face to see in what direction to look, for I saw nothing. His countenance startled me; it was frozen with horror. I looked forward, and yonder, scarcely visible to me, because of the slight curve in the path, stood, some fifty yards away, a figure, the appearance whereof was enough to freeze the sturdiest blood. It was the form of a woman, standing motionless as a statue. The hair was thin, but hung in wisps to the waist. One of the fleshless hands held a lock of the long, faded tresses. The single garment worn, appeared to be a long, loose woolen wrapper, much too large for the apparently skeleton figure, and hanging in tatters. The arms were bare to the elbows, and strangely fair; the feet were unshod, and white like the arms. But it was the face that most affected the beholder. It was as the face of the dead, and at the distance seen, as expressionless. The eyes seemed dark and sunken, and the brows, black lines across the marble-like forehead.

“It is human, at least,” I whispered hoarsely. “Let us go forward.”

Reluctantly and very slowly, my companions moved on, our eyes bent on the figure. When we had come within twenty paces of it, for the first time it moved, and toward us. We stopped; the figure stopped. We moved forward, and in a moment it started. We stopped again, but this time the figure came on, apparently taking no note of our presence. It did not even appear to see us.

And now a great fear began to shake my soul. A tremor ran through all my frame; my knees smote one another; my hold upon the arms of my companions began to relax.

Colonel Townshend noticed this and though apparently transfixed with horror, turned to observe me. My face alarmed him scarcely less than that of the figure. He placed his arm about me to support me; but



my eyes remained fastened upon the approaching form. When within five feet of me, it stopped and turned its face over its shoulder. And then I knew it was *her* face!

"*Elsie!*" I ejaculated in a voice so choked and broken as to be scarcely audible, and sank to the earth.

My companions laid me along the path and the wretched girl moved on and would have walked over my prostrate body, but for the gentle interposition of Jack.

For a time I was helpless, though my mind remained active. As I reflected, there began to form within me a great hope. I made a mighty resolution. I cried in the heart of me:

"Up, up, miserable weakling! This is no time to faint or fail." But when I strove to arise, I could not. My friend came and bent over me: "Ah, Felix, my son, may God pity you!"

And he began to chafe my face, my temples, my hands.

"You must be yourself now," he faltered.

"O God! give me my father's courage," I cried as I staggered to my feet, leaning on my friend. I looked about. A hundred yards down the path we had traversed, slowly walked the figure, and following closely, Jack.

"Come!" I cried, starting forward, but at the first step, I sank to my knees. I struggled to my feet again.

"O," I cried, "help me this once for sweet pity's sake!" And trembling in every limb, I moved on.

I gained strength as I staggered forward; the will was dominating the body. At every step I grew more self-reliant. Forgetting my infirmity, I bounded forward, freeing myself from the sustaining arms of my friend. But when I came within a few feet of the figure, I felt my heart dying again, within me. I slackened my pace, but did not stop. Then with a supreme effort of the will, I moved quickly past it. I dared not look back. At a distance of twenty yards or so, I stopped. I have never been able to recall the mental process impelling me to this course of conduct.



I turned about. Slowly the figure came on. Beyond it, I saw the figure of Colonel Townshend, and it was evident he thought me insane, too. I stood in the middle of the path, while wave after wave, like shocks from a battery, thrilled me from head to foot. But the will prevailed over the infirmities of the flesh as forever it must, in great battles won, and I awaited. The agony of these moments lay upon me like the weight of many years, instantly added to my life.

But such agony cannot last; thank God, it cannot last. Suddenly my limbs were as adamant; my nerves as steel! Not a muscle quivered, not a nerve was shaken, as I stood looking dumbly into the awful face! It is within two feet of me, and with eyes as expressionless as those of a new-born babe, looking at, without seeing me, it came on. I opened my arms and enfolded it.

I saw my friend cover his face for a moment, to shut out the scene; then he sprang forward as if terrified.

Gently he unclasped my arms, saying in broken accents:

"Oh, my son, this will surely kill you! Leave the poor child to me, and go with Jack to the boat."

Without a word; without a look at the face which had lain once more against my bosom, for in the madness of despair I had pressed the wretched girl to my heart, I turned, and leaning on Jack, walked toward the river. He rowed me silently across, and spreading a rug he had carried all day for my use, bade me lie down. I obeyed, and he had scarcely turned to leave me before I was in that profound sleep which follows those inward storms that stir the great deeps of the hearts and souls of us.

I was awakened by the voice of Colonel Townshend, saying:

"Can you go, now, Felix? Let me help you," and in a moment more I was unquestioningly walking toward the carriage.

The sun was low. "I must have slept some time," I muttered to myself; but my senses were still asleep, and I said nothing. When we reached the carriage, the figure sat in the back seat, and some one, a stranger, by



its side, while Jack was in the driver's place, whip in hand.

"Get in here, Felix," said the Colonel, kindly, and indicating the front seat. I hesitated, my friend eyeing me anxiously. "I must sit by her," I said to myself. And then addressing the stranger:

"That is my place. You will sit here," indicating the other seat.

After a moment's hesitation during which the Colonel and the stranger exchanged glances, the seat was vacated, and after a whispered conversation with my friend, the stranger went away. Unaided, I had climbed into the seat by the side of the figure, and the carriage moved forward, the Colonel sitting in the front seat, in such position that he could see any movement in the rear one.

The figure by my side had grown weary, and ere we had gone fifty yards, was lying in my arms, asleep. It chanced that it had leaned *toward* and not *from* me.

I did not seek to look into the awful face, but sat gazing through the window of the carriage, as emotionless as a statue of stone. There comes a time, oh, thank God, when the emotions must sleep or die!

Mine slept!



## BOOK IV.

## CHAPTER XVIII.

“Love believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things.”—*Paul*.

Within a week I had been appointed guardian of the person and property of the stricken girl. I had not only the ample fortune bestowed by her uncle's will upon Elsie, to devote to my settled purpose to bring about the restoration of her reason, if human skill could compass that end, but also had at my disposal, for that object, that of Hortense. And I would, and do not shame to confess it, have unhesitatingly devoted the last farthing of both fortunes, and have sold myself into perpetual bondage for yet other means to accomplish the now sole object of my life.

Within a fortnight, she had been placed in the most famous institution for the treatment of mental diseases in all the land, and messages were *en route* to summon to a council the most learned experts in such diseases. After what seemed an age, these came.

I told them my pitiful story. I meant that whatsoever interest could by the saddest tale ever poured into mortal ears, be awakened in the human heart, should be, in the hearts of these wise men.

Patiently and again and again, they examined every symptom, noted every aspect and movement of their charge; watching her sleeping and waking.

“If she would but evince the slightest sensibility in any direction,” said one to another, not aware that I heard, “but you observed that when I pricked her arm with a needle, she did not look at it, did not lift her



hand, though the adjacent parts quivered. The most insensate of the lowest orders, with life, and capable of motion, will withdraw a wounded part."

The other shook his head. "It is indeed a hopeless case," he agreed.

"Is there no hope?" I asked, walking in upon them.

"My dear Mr. Munro, you must not, really you must not, press this inquiry now. We are but two of five into whose joint hands and hearts you have committed this case, and you must await patiently a little longer, for we shall render our opinion in writing, and fully within a day or two," answered the first speaker. And then after a pause, "The young lady has never smiled since you found her?"

Alas! I could but answer that she had not.

"Oh," I continued, clasping my hands in despair, "if she had but smiled, or evinced any—the slightest emotion—I should not be utterly hopeless, as I have been, I think, from the beginning."

"Ah, yes, my friend," was the hopeless answer.

"Oh, sir," I cried, feeling unable to wait, "is there no hope that she may grow as an infant grows; that beginning life anew at the point where I found her, she may at length discover some sign, some evidence of intelligent being? Do not tell me there is no hope of this!"

"On this, as on every other point, you shall receive our most candid judgments," was the only answer vouchsafed my eager questioning.

I had forborne hitherto, making any effort by appeals to her sense of sight or hearing, to arouse the sleeping mind of the girl. I had feared to take the risk, or to make any experiment, because of my ignorance, until I had taken counsel of the highest authority. But all the while I felt that whatever the decision of these wise men, I should still have this left me; and slight as was the prospect, it helped me to bear the suspense, and would, I felt, help me to hear the worst.

"So long as we both shall live," I forever found myself saying, "I shall not cease my efforts to recall her."

(And in those cases where there is no cure this side



the grave, oh, may we not hope that in the economy of God's government, death is indeed and at last the *panacea*—the perfect cure for all mental disorder?)

At last the council had held its final sitting and was ready to deliver its judgment. It would, no doubt, interest any scientific reader into whose hands these memoirs may chance to fall; and this opinion of these wise men will be left, with these writings, to be disposed of at the discretion of my executors, but I have not the heart to transcribe it on these pages.

It will suffice to state that, from beginning to end, there was no sentence, no word, to inspire one poor ray of hope in a heart only too anxious to find something by which to hold, and to which in its appointed life work, it might, in hours of weariness, turn for courage.

"The lover's task shall begin where that of the learned scientists has ended," I cried, in my heart; while I think my soul was inspired with something better than merely mortal fortitude and courage.

I carried my darling back to her home.

I had had ambition; I took leave of it. I had aspired to the lofty walks of my chosen profession, and toward these had mounted with swift and eager feet; I turned my face from those heights, and my feet from those shining paths. Farewell, ambition! Farewell, ye glorious walks, where the fearless elect, inspired by ambition, tread. Another, an obscure, aye, a hopeless task, is set before me. Even she for whom I must perform it is never, in this world, to know how willingly, how patiently its work has been done.

I called to my aid the most experienced nurses; and of them exacted patient and unquestioning obedience. Day and night this helpless being must be under the eye of one of these, save only during those hours of the day when I should myself have her in charge.

Each morning I met her as she was led from her room. With my own hand I gave her food, seating her day after day by my side, at the table. After the morning meal I led her forth, each day extending our walk along the same path on which we had walked together last, on that evening in the springtime.



It was the middle of October when at last I led her to the old seat under the tree wherein the robins built their annual nest. I seated her and walked away some distance from which to observe her. She had regained much of her lost flesh, and her hair, which had slowly fallen out, was being succeeded by a thick growth, wavy and soft, and fine as silk. It was the same golden brown, only through it were streaks of gray.

On this morning, I felt an unusual hopefulness. This state was due to the fact that some mornings before, when I had led Elsie to the table and seated her, I had left the room for a moment. On my return the faithful Hortense had said that Elsie had, during my absence, looked toward my seat and moved uneasily in her chair. But if she had, she took no note of my return. Still, the look of mingled surprise and pleasure in the face of Hortense satisfied me that the movements of Elsie, whatever they had been, and whether chanced or intelligent, were unusual and significant.

At dinner I again absented myself, and was ready to fall as I returned to learn the result. Again, Hortense maintained that the girl had looked toward my place and moved about, and in this was corroborated, though not confidently, by her aunt. And on the morning of this day, she had taken a spoon in her hand, as I lifted it to her mouth.

As I stood thus, at the distance of a few paces, watching her, an insect chanced to light on her hand. She looked at it. My heart stood still, for hitherto she had taken no notice of such things. A moment she continued to gaze at it, then lifted the hand. The insect flew away, and the hand dropped.

But I had in my mind now a graver matter. I was to make an experiment which I felt was to determine for the present at least, whether there was anything left on which to work, or to which appeal might be made. I had procured from his former host a large and excellent "likeness" of Costo, and had it with me now, as also one of myself, taken especially for Elsie a year ago. For the reader must remember that I bore at this time little resemblance to myself as I appeared when last



seen by her before her captivity. My hair, which had been closely shaven, was yet short, and like hers, streaked with gray; while my face looked older by many years, and was thin.

With emotions indescribable, I resumed my seat at Elsie's side and laying my arm about her shoulders suddenly brought the face of Castelar before her. A shudder shook her from head to foot, and she started as if to arise. I stayed her gently, when she lifted her hands and covered her eyes. The very earth reeled before me, and I felt as if I should die of suffocation. I withdrew the likeness and tenderly, but with shaking nerves, removed her hands from her face, calling her by endearing names as of old. I felt, rather than saw, for I had not the courage to look into her face, that she was searching for the hateful picture. Failing to find it she turned her gaze on me. O God! shall I ever forget that look? So full of an indescribable, insane terror and horror, mingled! I could not bear the awful expression of her countenance. I folded her in my arms, hiding her face in my bosom, against my quivering heart.

I must have sat so for some minutes, my soul in a sea of tumult, when I lifted her head and looked into her face. *She was asleep.* Gently stroking her silken hair, I awoke her. Her face was placid, but in her eyes lingered a remnant of the awful terror; or did I but fancy it?

But I had not done. I drew forth the other picture, my own likeness, and as suddenly as before held it before her eyes. There was no shudder, no start, but gazing fixedly upon it, she slowly bent forward, drawing nearer to it, while I changed position, until kneeling before her, my face and the portrait side by side, confronted her. Her eyes were full of an expression of perplexity, as if she were endeavoring to recall something dimly remembered. After a long moment she looked from the picture into my face, the shadow of perplexity deepening, while her lips moved as if forming the word, "Felix," and I heard a whisper as of my name.



"O how slight, how feeble these signs!" you will say. Ah, yes; but they sufficed me now, and if they had been greater, I could scarcely have borne the joy of it. I strained her to my heart; I covered her face with kisses and burning tears. I prayed, I wept, I shouted aloud. I laughed as one bereft laughs in his madness. I called her by every endearing name which love had ever suggested. At length, exhausted by emotion, I sank into the seat and sat, holding her unresponsive hand in mine.

I led her home again; in the greatness of my joy, walking upon the heights.

Hortense, seeing the unwonted aspect of my face, followed us quickly into Elsie's room.

"O Felix," she began eagerly, and ready to cry at the sight of my countenance, "what is it?"

No one can by words communicate signs so subtle as those I had seen in Elsie's eyes; and as I ended my effort to do so now, the face of Hortense wore a pained look of disappointment. But despite all, I found growing within me, a far-reaching hope to which nothing seemed impossible.

And that night in my dreams, my darling came to me with radiant face, and with loving hands lifted my weary head, and laying it on her bosom, kissed me a thousand times, and blessed me for all that I had done and suffered for her.

I had been urged by my friends and advised by my physician to remit somewhat my watch and care. "It will wear out the heart and soul of you, Felix, if you go on so. Come with me, to-morrow, and help me to try a case. I need you. Elsie will be cared for. Hortense will take your place," urged Colonel Townshend, a few days later. I hesitated, but at length consented. Since bringing her from the asylum I had not been absent from Elsie a day. Indeed, since finding her on the island, no day had passed, of which I had not devoted hours to watch and ward over her.

I arose at the usual hour the next morning, but the attendants did not have Elsie ready to go with me to breakfast. A thought occurred to me. I hastened to Hortense.



"Take charge of Elsie as soon as she quits her room, and take my place at the table, and after breakfast lead her forth, as I do. Watch her closely, and report."

Hortense promised to follow my directions.

I took my place by the side of my partner for the first time in many months, with that feeling of indifference which I suppose a slave, who does his task because he must, experiences. I knew nothing of the cause to be tried, and understood that I was not expected to know anything. It had been a *ruse* to get me away for a day.

But presently I was conscious that something unusual was going on about me. I lifted my head, for until now I had sat leaning over a table, observing nothing. There was among the bar, the jury and the bench, not a dry eye. My changed appearance, my old looking face, my whitening hair, my "utterly worn and tired aspect," as the judge described it to my partner, touched their kind hearts, and these strong men wept. The situation was too painful, so begging Colonel Townshend to excuse me, I went to our office, for the idea which I wished to work out forbade my return to Elsie, now.

As I walked the street this first time, I began to observe the manner of the people toward me. Some bowed, a few took my hand and pressed it, silently. A group of women whom I passed, were weeping; all looked at me with pity. It was good of them; but it reminded me, as nothing else could have, of the distance between this depth and that height on which I had a year ago stood, as the distance between these appeared to worldly ambition.

In the office, I could only walk the floor and wait for the hour to come. I was in the habit of returning from my walk with Elsie, at about the hour of noon. It was until then I must wait.

At half-past eleven I bent my steps homeward. Was any part of the great expectation with which I had suffered my mind to become filled, to be realized, or was the experiment to be a blank failure?

I met the housekeeper in the lower hallway.



"Has Hortense returned?" I asked anxiously.

"She has not been out with Miss Cradock," was the answer, accompanied with a significant expression of countenance.

"Why?" I asked.

"Excuse me, Mr. Munro, but Miss Parté directed me to send you to her. She is in the library."

In a moment more I was walking down the long room. I could see Hortense sitting at the further end, near a window; and I fancied I saw a meaning look in her face.

"Sit down, Felix," she commanded in a low, gentle, but as I thought, tremulous voice. I obeyed.

"The housekeeper tells me you did not go out walking. Why?" I began.

In a voice scarcely audible, came the answer: "Elsie would not go."

"*Would* not go?" I cried. "O Hortense, sister, think what you are saying! Don't, for heaven's sake, if you care for me, don't say that idly!"

"Please, Mr. Munro, be calm. I shall tell you all, faithfully; but remember, it is little I have to tell."

Hortense said this as if on the verge of a fit of weeping.

"Forgive my impatience, Hortense. I am so nervous and shaken. Go on, pray," I said. She went on:

"I met Elsie at the threshold of her room, as you directed, and taking her hand, as I have often seen you do, said, as you always say: 'Come, Elsie, let us go down to breakfast.' I was not looking at her, but had turned to start, when I found she was not moving. Then I looked at her face, and—Felix—I don't want to be too sure, but I thought I saw there, a look of anger, perhaps disappointment better describes it. It was, as you said the other day, a mere shadow, but—I may be mistaken. Did she ever refuse to go with you?"

"Certainly not!" I said. "What then? Do go on, pray."

"I let loose her hand and waited. At this moment the housekeeper came up stairs, and I beckoned to her to take notice. I took the hand again, and Felix, she



withdrew it, and after standing a moment, she turned and went into her room."

"O Hortense, you know not what joy you have awakened in my poor heart; greater than I had hoped for ever again in this world. Can you tell me more? Where is she? Where is my darling?" And I arose to go to her, but Hortense reached forth her hand.

"Stay!" she pleaded, "Please sit down. She is asleep now. I do not know that I ought to tell you; for I think myself, there is nothing in it—but—" and she paused.

"O sister, kindest, best of friends, tell me, pray tell me what it is!" I entreated.

"Now mark you, Felix, I think it was but the imagination of the nurse, but *she* says that Elsie, while sleeping, muttered something—*your name*, '*Felix*,' she thinks it was. She came to tell me."

Hortense was surprised at my reception of this intelligence. I shook my head. But the other facts! Were they not enough for this once?

It was arranged that we should proceed to the region of Elsie's rooms and that as soon as she should awaken, and be led to the door, Hortense should take her hand again.

This plan was carried out. The nurse led her to the door, when Hortense took her hand, saying:

"Come, Elsie, let us go down to breakfast." But Elsie stood as still as a statue.

I walked slowly toward her, Hortense stepping aside. I reached forth my hand, when she lifted hers into mine, and moved forward, before I had spoken or taken a step.

No bridegroom ever left the altar with his bride leaning on his arm, with a greater joy in his heart; alas! alas!

Seated at the table, for it had been kept in readiness:

"Hortense," I began, "in my childhood, I was the owner of a pet lamb, and its name was '*Elsie*,' for even then you know, I loved the bright faced little girl and named my pet lamb for her. Well, that lamb grew to know me. It would follow me everywhere. I fed it



from my hand. My brothers would offer it food, but unless very hungry, it would not touch it, while if I offered it, the little thing would take it, though it already had quite enough. It would come into the house to me, where, in the corner, I was used to sit on the floor, and read. It would lay its head on my knee and wait patiently for my attentions; but after awhile, not receiving them, it would put its nose up to my face and bleat very softly. At last a wicked eagle carried it off.

"Do you know, Hortense, I have been thinking that if I can only teach this poor girl to love and look up to, and depend upon me, as my little lamb did; if she will only do this and will learn to speak my name, I shall be content to devote the remnant of my broken life to nothing else but watching over and caring for her."

The tears ran down the face of Hortense, as she answered very softly:

"O Felix, the love you bear this poor afflicted girl, were enough to call her from the dead! Surely God will grant you this!"

And He did, blessed be His name; though in my madness I had cursed Him, and like a fool had said: "There is no God."

Long and hopefully and patiently I strove to teach the simple lessons I had appointed. Other tasks, if others lay at hand, I put aside; this, never. To feel, each day, that I was somewhat more necessary to her than on yesterday; this was what I strove for. To learn, after a few hours' absence, that she had wandered about uneasily, in search of me; and to see her on my return, come to meet me, with a look of perfect content, and all this came, sooner even than I had hoped; this it was that grew to be as essential to my happiness, as my presence to her comfort.

It was with fear and trembling that about a year after my experiment in the woodland, I again ventured to show her the picture of Castelar. Having advised Hortense of my purpose, I led Elsie into the library and seated her within the recess of a bay window, filled with the soft light of an autumn sunset. A small lamp



stand stood near her. Hortense placed, unobserved by Elsie, the likeness on this stand, then sat down by her. In walking about I purposely, for Elsie always followed my every motion, stopped, so that the stand was between us. Her eyes fell upon the picture. For a moment her gaze rested on it, and then into her face came that awful expression, filling me with unspeakable horror. I snatched the likeness and flung it behind me into the grate. But too late.

With a piteous cry, neither a moan nor a shriek, but a mingling of both, she started to her feet as if to fly, but I sprang forward and taking her in my arms, sought gently to stay her. She looked up into my face, her eyes full of an unutterable terror, and her countenance contorted. I have no doubt that at the moment she thought herself seized by Castelar, and suffered all the agony of such a calamity.

"It is I, Elsie, my darling; it is your own Felix! Do not be afraid. Castelar shall not harm you!" I pleaded, while she continued in such notes of despair as I hope never in this, or other world, to hear again, to moan and cry. But as I went on to entreat gently and to repeat my own name and hers, the aspect of terror abated, and as she lay upon my arm still looking into my face, she called my name, "Felix," again and again, in such piteous accents as would have moved the heart of a fiend.

I bore her to a sofa and sat beside her, still holding her in my arms, and still endeavoring to calm her. Hortense sat on the other side, and while stroking her head, said:

"Don't you know me, Elsie? Don't you know your sister Hortense? Tell me, darling, that you know me!" As Hortense continued, Elsie turned her eyes from my face to hers and after gazing intently into it for a moment, uttered the name, "Hortense," as a child learning to talk might repeat a word after its nurse.

"O thank God!" cried Hortense, in suppressed and choking voice. Since her rescue, Elsie had till now not spoken the name of her foster sister.

A great joy stuns and paralyzes, even as a great



grief. I sat in a sort of stupor, afraid, I think, to speak or move; and when I looked at Hortense, the tears were streaming from her eyes, though her face was full of an expression of joy.

"Look!" she cried, pointing at Elsie's face, now averted from me. I lifted it, and lo! *She was weeping!*

All the precious gems lying in all the seas would at that moment have been as nought, in my esteem, compared with these precious jewels on my darling's face! These first tears that had fallen from those dear eyes since her madness.

Still I was afraid to speak, afraid to move. I sat as if the eternal destiny of an immortal soul depended on my remaining motionless and dumb; I scarcely breathed, while Hortense, as if reading my thoughts, was as motionless as myself.

For many minutes I had sat so, when, noting her perfect quiet, I looked into her face; she had fallen into a deep and gentle slumber, and there had risen on each pale cheek a hectic spot. Hortense arose quietly and brought pillows, when we laid her, still sleeping, along the sofa.

I had sent for her physician; one who had watched her daily from the beginning, a Doctor DeMancourt, who for reasons yet to appear, took more than a merely professional interest in his patient.

Ah, if the soul, while yet in mortal environment is capable of such agony as that of hope and fear which mine, in this brief hour, suffered, well may its state of future retribution be described in Holy Writ as one of fire and of ceaseless gnawing of deathless reptile.

I met the Doctor at the gate and led him along the walks of the grounds while I poured into his ear, in speech broken and ejaculatory, and only half intelligible, an account of the events just recorded, and at the end stood waiting for him to speak, as if his first word was to consign me to hopeless despair or to lift my soul into *elysium*.

This physician, though little older than myself, possessed to a degree that must have amazed the honest fellow, my affection and confidence. He had won these



by boldly dissenting from the hopeless prognosis of the council of experts. On reading their report and opinion he had said: "This is positive cruelty! Call it honest cruelty, if you will; it is none the less cold-blooded—I will not say, brutal, since they are famous *savants*. They have no warrant and certainly no vocation, to say what, in effect, they do say, that there is no hope. There *is* hope, I tell you, and hope there must remain for, at least, a long time to come." It was to Colonel Townshend that this was said. He had expressed himself with more caution to me, while yet saying enough to win my confidence and affection, as I have said.

He did not answer hastily now, though he must have seen that every moment was an age of agony to me.

"O sir, can you not speak one comforting word?" I entreated.

"Forgive me, Mr. Munro," he said kindly. "Forgive me. I was thinking what I could say that might not be more cruel than silence. There are signs of promise in the story you have told." And then as if alarmed at his own words, he added quickly:

"Do not, let me entreat you, do not build any hope on what I say! The young lady may awaken from this sleep; nay, she probably will, in the same state in which she was before receiving the shock, for such it was. None but God—I speak reverently—none but God, who only 'apprehendeth our frame,' can foresee the course of this malady. Insanity has baffled, as it will, most likely, to the end of time, the wisest and most skillful. What appear the same phenomena rarely are followed twice, even in the same patient by the same results. All that I dare say, is that the incident proves that memory, reflection and emotion still survive; they are not extinct. She was shocked. Ten thousand pictures of persons she had never seen, would not have moved her. This one appealed to her memory, and it responded; it is alive. Really I had feared it was dead. This tells us it has been sleeping.

"O, I do not know, sir!" he broke off, "I do not know. God only, knows! Pray do not hold by what



I have said, or build *much* hope on what you have witnessed."

And taking my arm, he led me into the house. The nurse who had just come from her, said that Elsie had stirred once, but was still sleeping, and that Hortense was at her side.

Seeing presently a light in the library, we went cautiously to the door and looked in. There, on the sofa, by the side of Hortense, sat Elsie, her face as placid, her aspect as listless as before.

The hope that had grown within me in this short hour—and I knew not till then how it had filled all the chambers of my soul—died, leaving me faint and sick at heart.

I walked toward her, when she arose and came to me as usual, evincing no sign; even the hectic had faded from her cheeks.

Dr. De Mancourt, having lingered at the side of Hortense, now came to us saying:

"At all events, Felix, you will still have the picture, if we should ever desire—if we should need it, you know—why, Mr. Munro, what ails you?" he added, laying his hand on my shoulder and eyeing me narrowly.

"Nothing, nothing!" I gasped, "only I wish I could die! O sir, if you think I might die, please do not interpose!"

In my desperation at its effect on Elsie, I had flung the accursed picture into the fire, and it had been consumed.

"I see, I see now," I went on falteringly, "I see, too late, what I have done. O sir, I burned the picture; and now there is nothing left us with which to work, with which to make appeal. There is no other likeness of the villain extant, perhaps not in all the world."

While the doctor affected to regard the matter as of little importance, I could see that he deeply regretted the loss of the picture.

It was with feelings of deeper despair than ever that I took up the burden of life again.

When kidnapped, Elsie had worn two articles of



adornment; the one, the ring of betrothal, of small intrinsic value, that I had placed upon her finger; the other, the gift of her uncle—was a heavy gold chain of rare workmanship, and to which was attached a large locket, in the center whereof was set a costly jewel. It was no doubt because of these and a gold watch she wore, that the deaf mutes had kept her presence on the island a secret. They had stripped her of these as also of her apparel, during her long illness in the cabin, and had from time to time disposed of them to an unscrupulous pawnbroker. It was not until a few days after the events just recorded, that I had, at the end of much difficulty, been able to find and reclaim the lost chain and locket.

This locket had contained a miniature likeness of myself, but for the purpose of destroying evidence of identity, it had been removed. I was however, able to replace it with another from the same picture. While sitting one evening by her side, I placed the chain in Elsie's lap, the doctor and Hortense being present. She lifted it and looked long and intently at it, and then from it at my face with the same expression of perplexity before noted; and then she tried to place it about her neck. I aided her, and having fastened it, I put the locket in her hand. Again she gazed at that, knitting her brows as one who struggles to recall a dimly remembered thing.

With trembling hand I touched the spring and the locket opened, revealing the likeness, when she gazed upon it for a long time, her eyes filling with a strange light, half of tenderness, half of fear. At length she murmured, "Felix," and lifted it to her lips; then dropping it suddenly, clasped her face in her hands; and sat swaying back and forth, moaning piteously.

I was so possessed by the study of her behavior, as evincing signs of intelligence, that I did not realize the pathos of the scene until I heard the sobs of Hortense and saw the tears on the face of the doctor, when it rushed upon my soul like a torrent, and I took the swaying form in my arms and pressed it to my heart. In the briefest space she had fallen into deep sleep.



Many, many times this scene was re-enacted, but alas! it always ended at the same point.

But why go on, since a recital of the events of this period of alternating hope and despair, could but weary the most patient reader? For at the end, I was sure of but this: Her memory and emotion still lived, but in such dormant state that no known means could suffice to awaken them. It did seem that nothing short of the touch of the Christ, in miracle, could restore my darling.

One assurance I should mention, had been given by the doctors: even the most hopeless of them maintained that there was no organic or structural disease of the brain.

And thus was I left—for the most part in despair—to grope my blind and ever narrowing way.

Endeavoring always to appear cheerful in her presence, I addressed myself day after day to my appointed task. And now after all the years, I can look back and say that I never did it grudgingly. And in some measure, I must have grown resigned, if not content, for each day, I said, "Wait a little longer, O my soul, and God will replace the lights in the face of your darling, and it shall shine with immortal splendor."

Cherishing this faith—the faith of my mother—but which, in my despair, I had derided and cursed, my soul, if not satisfied, grew apace, heavenward.

---

## CHAPTER XIX.

### AN ANNIVERSARY AND AN APPARITION.

It is the third anniversary of Elsie's rescue from the island, and like the two preceding, is being observed at the mansion as a day of thanksgiving. It is a quiet, even a solemn occasion, at which are few invited guests, Colonel Townshend being, of course, of the number.

Let it not, however, be supposed that this beautiful



home was a joyless place, wholly. These memoirs have dealt only with its sorrowful aspects. The grand old manse sheltered two souls as happy as souls may be in such a world as this: Hortense and Dr. De Mancourt. For it transpired long after that these two generous people had become lovers while engaged, side by side, in a wager of battle for my life, following the kidnapping of Elsie. And a year ago, this day, in the great parlors of the dear old house, in the midst of a multitude of friends, the solemn words linking their lives and destinies, had been said.

This simple statement of the joyous event must suffice, for my pen hastens.

Every summer since my illness following Elsie's captivity, I had suffered a recurrence of fever. I was ill now, but anxious not to mar the pleasure of my friends, had managed to disguise the fact, though I was almost blind with dizziness.

On these occasions, Hortense, to please me, arrayed Elsie in the same garments she wore on the evening of the fourteenth of April, when we had visited the robins, and in the twilight of which I had taken leave of her.

This apparel, though strangely out of fashion, was yet strangely becoming; its somber colors, for it was a mourning costume, contrasting not unpleasingly with the delicate pallor of the wearer.

Elsie wore this apparel now, even to the slippers she had on, when at the door she said: "Remember, Felix, darling, meet me at the river at precisely six o'clock."

And so arrayed she sat, after dinner, by my side, on a great sofa. It was evening, and three shaded gas jets shed a soft and mellow light throughout the room. The day had been of unusual warmth, and the windows and doors, except the wire screens, were open, and a grateful breeze springing up since sunset, blew gently through the apartment.

At length grown weary, for she was capable of considerable excitement on such occasions, and as I at least persuaded myself, dimly understood their meaning, Elsie had laid her head in my bosom, its favorite resting place, and while I stroked and caressed her long silken



hair which hung loose about her shoulders, she had fallen asleep.

Of all the guests of the evening, Colonel Townshend alone remained; the others present being Doctor De Mancourt, Hortense, and Elsie's nurse. The Colonel, always fond of discoursing on learned themes, had adroitly led the Doctor, himself a proficient in, especially, the English classics, into a disputation as to a passage in Shakespeare.

The controversy had grown until I had been drawn into it, and having laid Elsie along the sofa, had joined the group. At length the contention waxed so warm between the two leading disputants, that one, the Colonel, as I remember, proposed to lay a trifling wager, which, being covered by the Doctor, it was agreed that we should repair to the library and appeal to the authorities, Hortense and myself going along, professedly as arbiters, but really as partisans. For I had stood with the Colonel, while Hortense was entirely sure of her husband's position.

Admonishing the nurse who sat at a window at the end of the room, I followed the others.

Having settled the disputed point, we fell upon other topics, and so lingered. A full half hour had passed and we were all sitting about a table and for the moment silent, when suddenly our ears were pierced by a long scream of agony, so appalling that for the instant we sat as if frozen with horror, looking into each other's blanching faces. Then followed shriek after shriek. I sprang forward, fairly flying out of the library, along the passage and into the drawing room, in the midst of which I met the reeling, staggering form of Elsie, her eyes full of that awful terror, her face distorted. She was still shrieking, when seeing me, she stretched forth her hands, crying piteously: "Felix! Felix! save me!" and fell into my arms in a dead swoon.

Full of remorse at having left her so long, and feeling as one must who suddenly finds his best-beloved slain, I carried her to the sofa. There were no signs of



life; her lips were purple, her eyes half open and fixed, as in death.

My heart seemed to stand still, and blindness seized me. I sank upon my knees, praying silently, but with such fervor as I had never before felt that I, too, might die. I think I was losing consciousness, when a struggle and a gasp from Elsie arrested me. With an effort scarcely mortal, I staggered to my feet crying: "Help! help! O in Pity's name, will no one help me!" While already my friends had lifted Elsie and were endeavoring to restore her.

I recalled bitterly now how, in every instance of her dire need, I had proved recreant to aid her. I shook myself as a beast that would rid itself of chains and staggered forward, resolved to help. Out of pity my friends suffered me, though I could only impede them.

My poor darling was breathing, but manifesting no other signs of life. Her lips were purple still, while her hands were cold and clammy as those of the dying. That she was rapidly approaching the end I doubted not, and felt my heart breaking. I turned to the physician, saying hopelessly:

"Doctor, I might as well have murdered her myself as to have left her exposed to this."

"Exposed to what, Felix? What do you mean?" he questioned eagerly.

"Alas! I don't know! I don't know, but why did I leave her?" I answered, sinking into a chair.

I cannot tell what more was done. That my friends were exerting themselves earnestly, I knew dimly, but was too dazed and hopeless to observe them.

Presently the Doctor, turning a moment from his patient, administered to me a potion, which I swallowed mechanically, and remember no more.

When I awoke the gray light of dawn was stealing through the curtains of my window, for I had been carried to my room. A watcher sat, nodding, at the foot of my bed. Instantly my mind recurred to the events of the last night, and though suffering from a raging fever, I arose and was stealing from my room when the watcher awoke and came toward me, expos-



tulating; but I answered so calmly that he became satisfied, and seeing that I was dressed, for my clothing had not been removed, he opened the door and suffered me to pass out.

I had not the courage to ask him of Elsie, and started on, but not knowing whether she still remained below, I turned and looked at him, hoping to read in his face the tidings I dared not hear from his lips.

"Is she still in the library?" I faltered.

"No, I think she has been removed to her room," he answered.

"O she is not dead then!" I cried, as I started forward with more heart.

Without knocking, I opened the door and entered. The dim light of a lamp discovered the form of a single watcher at the head of the bed. It was Hortense. She arose and came forward, saying in a frightened whisper: "O Felix, is it you? Why, the Doctor said you were so ill!"

"Tell me of Elsie; is she yet alive? Is there any hope?" I questioned.

Before answering, Hortense chanced to turn so that the light fell upon her face, and I saw that she had been weeping. She motioned me to be seated, and drawing her chair up, sat by me. Her behavior would, at another time, have excited and alarmed me beyond measure; but a raging fever, like intoxication, blunts the sensibilities and inspires courage. She appeared to be making a great effort to control herself before speaking. I could hear Elsie breathing, and that helped me to wait with some patience. She was, at least, alive. But now, when I looked into Hortense's face, I fancied it was full of a light such as I had never seen in it before. This set my feverish brain afire. I could wait no longer.

"In the name of the pitying Jesus, tell me, tell me, Hortense!" I gasped. She bowed her head, apparently overcome, and laying her face in her hands upon my knee, sobbed hysterically.

A long moment I waited in an agony of perplexity, and then with an impatience of which I have thought



with shame, a thousand times, I whispered, hoarsely: "You wish to kill me, Hortense; you wish to kill me; else you would not treat me so!"

She lifted her face, full of mingled reproach and pity, and looked into mine; but when she saw its aspect, the look of reproach vanished, only that of pity remained, as, taking my hand, she stroked it tenderly, as she said in broken accents:

"Oh, my poor brother, how can I tell you without stirring too much hope in your loving, faithful heart! After all, it may not signify, and then you must suffer all the more for the disappointment."

I was dumb, and sat staring at, while scarcely seeing my companion, as she continued, falteringly:

"She talks almost constantly. Much of what she says is meaningless; but she has called for you many times: 'Where is Felix? Will he never come? Oh, will he never come?' And once when I bent over her as she said this, she looked up into my face, saying: 'Does he know, tell me, does he know I have come home?' and while I answered, her eyes closed, and she began again to talk unintelligibly."

As Hortense ended, I seized her rudely by the shoulders, saying:

"In the name of God, why was I not sent for?" But seeing the expression that arose in her face, I added in a voice of entreaty:

"Forgive me, Hortense; forgive me! I am a brute to treat you so."

Without answering she arose, and taking my arm, drew me out into the corridor, and sending the nurse who waited there to Elsie, led me to my own room and sat me down, before speaking a word.

"I urged that you be sent for," she began, "but my husband forbade it. He said you were in raving delirium. He has spent most of the night by your bedside, himself administering the medicine to cool your fever. It is only an hour since you grew quiet. You are on the border of delirium now, and must lie down. I have done very wrong to allow you to remain a moment out of your bed; but, oh, Felix, brother, I too,



have been beside myself. I felt I *must* tell you. But the doctor fears that it is only because of the raging fever that she talks with this seeming intelligence. He says we must wait and build but slight hope on what has happened.

"There, now, dear, let me help you to bed; for you look ready to faint."

I arose with her aid, and staggering to the bed, fell upon it. My head was bursting; the fever having returned in full vigor, was consuming me.

Hortense laid wet cloths upon my burning, throbbing forehead, and while I lay chiding myself bitterly for falling ill at the only moment, perhaps, when my darling would ever be able to recognize me—speak to me—I sank into unconsciousness.

When I awoke, it was morning again, and doctor DeMancourt was sitting at my bedside.

"Tell me, Doctor, is there any hope?" I began. He looked at me quickly, but did not answer. Thinking that his silence meant the worst, "Do not, pray do not keep me in suspense," I entreated.

He arose and lifted a curtain of the window, then returning, looked at me narrowly; and seeing that I was waiting, he said, quickly:

"Pardon me, Felix; I did not know—I mean your mind has been wandering. I have no bad news."

This sounded like evasion.

"What news have you? Pray do not withhold the truth. Nothing can be as bad as suspense," I pleaded.

"You are very, very weak, my dear friend, and must not talk. You have taken no nourishment for three days. Don't you see you must be perfectly quiet. Your fever is down now, but the slightest exertion will throw you back."

He spoke very gently, but without pause. I divined his purpose, and with great effort remained quiet, for what seemed a long time, and until overcome with anxiety.

"Nothing can be as hurtful as this suspense," I repeated. "If you will not tell me, I must go and see for myself."



And I struggled to a sitting posture, before he could interpose.

"Tut, tut, tut, Felix," he said, laying gentle hold of me and pressing me back upon my pillow. "You must not think of such a thing! Whatever you do, don't do that. The effect might be disastrous to the last degree—on her—to say nothing of yourself."

He said this very earnestly. And then after a silence, during which I was pondering his words, and endeavoring feebly to extract from them a grain of comfort, he went on:

"Felix, will you be content to ask no questions, if I tell you that this is probably a supreme crisis. Not in respect of life and death, but—in short, of all things I should dread most, what might follow what you just now threatened. Forgive me, my dear fellow, but I have just been telling Hortense how fortunate I esteem your present illness."

I lay at the end of this speech bending upon him such a look as, with all his courage, caused his color to change as he arose and walked lightly about the room, with averted face. He ended by going to the window, where he stood gazing out; and at last very cautiously drew forth his handkerchief and carried it to his eyes.

He had said enough. Great as was my anxiety, nothing could have induced me to ask, without his leave, another question. The wish of this faithful friend, who as I believed would have given his life to restore my darling to me, was entitled to my respect and obedience.

Again and again I went over his every word, until within my soul there began to grow a hope that compassed all things. Oh, the longings of those tedious days. Hortense visited me hourly, but limited her stay to a few minutes, and her speech to the simplest commonplaces.

Three times each day and again at midnight the doctor would come; but our intercourse in respect of Elsie's condition was in pantomime; I questioning him with my eyes, he answering with his.

My head, never quite right since that awful illness



of three years or more ago, had been wrecked anew by this present fever, and while now the fever was gone, I could not rise from my pillow, without being seized with a blinding vertigo; though when lying still I felt equal to the task of quitting my bed.

My mind was strangely acute and active. I thought much of what it could have been that had frightened Elsie; for I was sure that the cause had been external, objective.

Could it be, I questioned hourly, that Castelar had presented himself? No, no; fiend, devil, as he was, he could not have done such a thing; fear, if nothing else, would have deterred him.

At length, on the fifth day, as I remember, from that of my interview with the Doctor, I begged that Elsie's nurse be sent to me.

"I have questioned her fully, but if you wish to do so I will bring her here." It was the Doctor who said this, and then after hesitating, he added: "But, my dear fellow, you must not ask a single question about—you understand?"

"O have I not shown myself capable of keeping my promise, though I made none in words; after lying here with my heart bleeding?" I cried, peevishly.

"There, now; there, now; forgive me, that's a good fellow," he answered soothingly, as he left the room.

In five minutes he was back with the nurse, a person of rare qualities. She had the manners of a gentlewoman, and stood as much on her dignity. Possessed of excellent common sense, she had acquired much wisdom, and was positively incapable of falsehood. I had always treated her with the highest consideration and the utmost liberality, and enjoyed in return her unswerving fealty and deepest sympathy.

Her behavior toward her afflicted ward can be compared only to the care bestowed by a loving mother on a helpless, only child.

She took a seat facing me and sat waiting, respectfully, but with an air of embarrassment.

"Mrs. Anna," I began, "do you know or suspect what it was that frightened Miss Cradock?"



"Well, sir," she began falteringly, "my first duty is to confess my fault in disobeying your command to watch my poor charge, my poor girl. The evening was so warm, as you will remember, sir, and it looked so cool and inviting out in the grounds, with the moon shining and the delightful breeze, that I thought I might go out for a minute's recreation, as Miss Elsie appeared so quiet and sound asleep. I slipped out at the window and had taken a turn along the walk to the carriage way and back. I looked in, and seeing that Miss Elsie was yet quiet, I walked again, sir, to the drive and had turned about and was walking slowly along, my eyes on the path before me, when suddenly, I know not why, sir, I raised my eyes and looked in at the window when I beheld such a sight as I never had seen before, sir, and as I shall never forget. For there stood by the sofa a figure, far taller than any man I ever saw, sir. It wore no hat, its hair was long, reaching to the shoulders; its face was white, not pale, but white, whiter than any human—I mean, sir, whiter than any face I had ever before seen; and on the face as it appeared to be looking down on the girl, there was such an expression of pity, of sorrow, as I am sure was never seen on any human—on any face before, sir. And it was all so sudden that I just stopped and felt unable to move, sir, and was just looking at that sorrowful face, so full of pity, sir. And I need not tell you what I thought or what I hoped it might be, sir, for you would only think me foolish, and perhaps wicked; though there have been people cured of other maladies after such visits. And while I stood so, sir, I saw Miss Elsie throw her hands up like one startled; and then she sprang up, with that awful shriek that you all heard, and the figure glided out and disappeared. And that is all I know or saw, sir." She paused, and with hands folded, waited. I could not have spoken if my life had depended on it. What before had been a vague suspicion, was now a certainty.

"You are a Spiritualist, I believe?" at length suggested the Doctor. She answered, modestly, that she was.



I motioned her to quit the room. When she had gone I turned my eyes upon the Doctor. He was watching me narrowly.

"It *was* that fiend, Castelar, after all," I groaned, thinking again of my helplessness.

"I tell you, Doctor De Mancourt," I continued, my soul full of bitterness, as I reflected on all the evil that man had wrought, "Fate—for surely a tender and loving God could not have suffered all these black calamities to befall; Fate, I tell you, is against me. And having, alas, worshiped and believed in the true God—*forsooth*—I know not how to propitiate this grim deity."

"For shame! For shame! Felix Munro," cried the Doctor, aghast.

"Shame not *me*!" I cried. "But if you know what power rules in our puny affairs, in this waste and fallow field called Earth, tell me, tell me, that I may cry *it* shame! and curse it in its very teeth! For, henceforth, against its dominion I'm a rebel, eager to swear my allegiance to its most puissant adversary! Aye, let us have the very Prince of Darkness for our sovereign Liege and Ruler; for he at least will not suffer common fiends to revel in his domain."

I had struggled to a sitting posture, while the Doctor, with livid, frightened face and staring eyes, stood looking at, as if afraid to touch me.

But the objects in the room began to quiver, sway and dance; and then they glided into darkness.

---

## CHAPTER XX.

### THE MORNING BREAKETH.

The fever and delirium had returned, and my friends had for some days despaired of my life. My mind was in oblivion, and well it was for me, no doubt.

Again the light of an early dawn was stealing



through my window, when I opened my eyes, and saw standing at the foot of my bed the Doctor and Hortense. They were talking earnestly in subdued tones. But I presently caught a fragment of Hortense's speech which thrilled me to my finger ends.

"She asks for him so piteously that it breaks my heart to hear her," she said. The Doctor shook his head.

"Ah, but for this relapse he might have been almost well now. I never can forgive myself for allowing him to hear the story of the nurse. And, poor fellow, his mind went back into darkness and oblivion before I could tell him that it could not have been Castelar," was what the Doctor said.

"Do you really think, my dear, that he might not have evaded the police?" questioned Hortense.

"It is impossible; or if he did, he is still in hiding in the city. No, it surely could not have been he. A person so distinguished of aspect as Castelar, could not have escaped the vigilance of half a hundred policemen, not to speak of the thousands of citizens who joined in the search."

No tongue or pen can describe the sense of relief with which these last words filled me; no effort had been spared to capture the fiend.

I longed to speak, to urge the doctor not to suffer the vigilance of the police to be relaxed; for I still believed, not doubting that the tall figure seen by the nurse was none other than Castelar. But if I dared to speak, I should hear no more.

Hortense had stood for some time looking apparently straight at me, when she began again in the same gentle tones:

"Poor dear, she still thinks she has been in captivity on an island. She said yesterday: 'He might search forever, he could never find that dreadful place. It is in the midst of a sea and no vessel, only just that one, ever touches it.' And then, later in the evening she turned her eyes upon me as I sat by her, and looked so eager, as she said: 'You are sure he knows by this time, that I have come home? O Hortense, if he should



not know, and go on searching ; he might go for months or years even, for he would never give me up ! he would seek through all the world ; I know he would. I know he would. For O, he loved me so truly ! And she clasped her hands, while the tears ran down her face."

And the doctor for answer buried his face in his handkerchief.

The surging of my blood, which just now was like an angry sea, had subsided, and a heavenly calm, "a peace that passeth understanding," had supervened, filling all the chambers of my being. I closed my eyes in humble thanksgiving. Then I stretched my hand toward Hortense, calling her name softly. She came, and bending over me, looked into my face. And she knew that I had heard.

She glided to the window and lifted a curtain, admitting just a little more light, and then with her husband, returned to my bedside. The doctor was about to speak. I motioned him to be silent.

"Not a word ! Leave me please," I entreated calmly.

They quietly quitted the room, Hortense pausing at the door, and looking back at me, doubtingly. But I smiled reassuringly, and she went out.

I could have borne no more. My soul still full of an unspeakable joy and peace, I sank as calmly as never since a child I had, into a dreamless slumber.

When I awoke, the doctor, his face full of anxiety, sat at my bedside. I extended my hand ; he grasped it smiling as he said, cheerfully : " You are getting on bravely, bravely, my dear fellow. Never saw anything like it. And this is such a glorious day ; it's a pity you can't be out enjoying it."

But my mind was too full of other thoughts to dwell upon those of the weather or the day. Still holding his hand, I said feebly, though calmly enough.

"Now, will you not tell me more of her. Have I not waited patiently ?"

"Now, Felix, you are forgetting yourself ; forgetting your compact. You are too weak. It will not do."

"The compact is discharged. It is useless to evade.



I must know," I argued and urged. He hesitated, perplexed and doubtful.

"Very well," I resumed, "let me tell you then." He accepted the suggestion eagerly; and I went on, for I had worked it all out from Hortense's statement:

"She thinks she has been a prisoner or in some sort of captivity, on an island of some far away sea; and that in some way, by a chance vessel, I think, she has, she imagines, been rescued and brought home."

"Yes, yes! Go on," interjected the doctor eagerly.

"And she has been asking for me; and you have told her that I am away searching for her; and poor darling, she believes it; though I am so utterly worthless, it is doubtful if I had done it. Of course I should not; I'd have fallen ill and left her to hope in vain for my coming.

"O doctor," cried I, overwhelmed with a sense of my weakness, "please never tell her how worthless I am; what a weakling I am!"

"Now, now, Felix, shame on you! Oh, I must go. You'll bring the fever back, if I stay and listen at you rave." And he arose, as if to start.

"Please do not leave me; not yet. I'll be patient," I entreated. He sat down.

"Now tell me," I went on, "tell me, please, how she looks, what she says; and O doctor, has the fever left her? And is she rational when there is no fever? Or is it only the fever that enables her to understand?"

As I ended, he sat looking thoughtfully out of the window. I held my breath in anxious expectancy; for I knew that he was reflecting how most fittingly to answer.

He turned toward me and began:

"Since you already know so much, I will tell you more on condition that you promise to be patient and obey me. I shall require nothing unreasonable."

I promised, and he continued:

"For many days her fever raged fearfully, and was so unyielding that we almost despaired of her life.

"During this period she talked much, mostly as Hortense tells me, of those events which transpired before



her captivity, and in which you took part. She spoke often, as if addressing you; sometimes it was of your approaching marriage, again it was of the robins and of the squirrels. She fancied often, herself with you in the woodland, and talked, one moment, as if to you, the next, as if to the birds, calling them by their names. I did not understand its significance until my wife explained. It gave me great hope. It established on a more secure foundation the belief I had long entertained, that the brain is in a healthy state, and that the trouble was purely functional.

"We had already seen that the shock produced by seeing the portrait, started the brain to working. But its action was evanescent—the cause being transitory, momentary, really; and afforded, therefore, slight ground for hope or prophecy. But the fever, a more enduring cause, and acting directly on the brain, and not indirectly through the sense of sight, afforded many more phenomena oft-recurring."

Seeing my eager look and flushed face, the doctor paused, alarmed at what he had done.

Exerting every energy of mind and soul to appear calm, I entreated him to go on. "If you leave off here, I shall go distracted," I urged. "You have not told me how she behaved when the fever abated," I argued.

He resumed, but not without evincing regret that he had entered upon the subject:

"It still remained problematic what would follow the subsidence of the fever—the cause. Would the mind lapse into its former state of inactivity; or, having been set in motion, would it move on of its own momentum? The fever abated. Then followed two days of perfect, speechless quiet. But on the third she addressed Hortense, greeting her as one greets a friend after long separation. Hortense, after an absence of an hour returned into the room, when Elsie threw up her arms, crying: 'Ah, Hortense, dear Hortense, I am at home at last. Where have you been so long, that you did not come? Did you not know I had come back?' And Hortense, understanding the significance of this behavior, responded with a joyous greeting, and they



were directly in each other's arms, and both weeping for joy, while Elsie continued to speak of her return, and of her long captivity on an island.

"Hortense having at length taken a seat where they could look into each other's faces, Elsie suddenly asked for you: 'Where is Felix? Oh, Hortense, why does he not come? Does he know I have come? Where is he, please?' I had expected this, and knowing that it would be days before you could see her, I stepped forward before Hortense could frame any answer.

"'Excuse my intrusion, Miss Cradock,' I began, 'but you speak of Mr. Munro, I think. He is not at home, at present.'

"As I spoke a sorely perplexed and puzzled look shone in her eyes. She knitted her brows, as when there is a struggle of memory. I waited.

"'Yes, Felix; Felix—Munro,' she mused. 'Where is he? Where is Felix—Munro?'

"Drawing nearer and bending over her so that she might look into my eyes, I answered slowly, giving her time to grasp each word:

"'Miss Cradock,' I began; but seeing the puzzled look again, and her lips move as if repeating the name 'Cradock,' I began anew:

"'Elsie, I know where Felix Munro, *your sweetheart* is.' As I uttered these words, her eyes brightened, evincing a keen, though still puzzled interest.

"'Felix Munro, Elsie's sweetheart, is away from home, searching for Elsie.'

"She lay quiet and thoughtful for a time, and then shaking her head, while a hopeless look invaded her face, she spoke as if to herself: 'He can never find me. He can never find this awful place where I am. If he were to come to this very island, they would not tell him where I am; the people in this dreadful place never speak, not even to one another.' And she moaned piteously, while great tears ran down her temples.

"I answered quickly, as I lifted and chafed her hand: 'Why, Elsie, you are at home now. Don't you see? You are in your own room. See, here is Hortense; and Felix will come. I have sent a message, telling



him that you have come back home and are waiting for him to come. He will be here soon, Elsie.'

"The look of eager joy came again, as she answered, 'Oh, does he know I am home? Will he come? I must, I must see him! He is my Felix, my own, my own dear boy.' And she began to weep again.

"Telling Hortense to sit where Elsie could not see her, for a little while, I withdrew; for I was anxious that she should talk no more then. But I was pleased to see her weep. Not only because of what it indicated, but also because of its effect; there is no medicine that can supply the place of tears in such a case."

The doctor paused. I stretched forth my hand and grasped his. I could only say:

"Thanks, ten thousand thanks!"

He pressed my hand gently, and tears filled his great, kindly brown eyes.

"Leave me, now; leave me to dwell upon what you have said," I whispered, and pressing again silently my hand, he went away.

Day after day Hortense or her husband would come, bringing a word of comfort and hope. And while they were careful not to say so in words, yet what they imparted none the less certified me that my darling's mind was waxing clearer and stronger; though she still believed herself but just returned from long captivity on an island in some distant sea; even at times describing the appearance of the island, and of its tongueless inhabitants.

For myself I was rid of the fever; and but for my crazy head would have been quite able to quit my bed.

Though the longing in my soul to go to Elsie was like a consuming hunger, I was yet sustained by such patience as amazed my friends and caused them no slight anxiety. They were not sure of my mental state, in view of this behavior.

Each day I tested the state of my head, being careful to do so in the absence of the doctor, who constantly admonished me to be quiet and give nature a chance. At last I ventured to rise and walk about my room; and was pleased to find myself able to maintain my equipoise.



Elsie's apartments and my own were widely separated, being in different wings of the great house. But I had begun to form the design to go by stealth and look upon her face. I knew that in such weather the doors of her room would be left open.

As I walked about my room now—it was evening—I resolved to carry out my purpose, this very night. Impatient for the hour to come, I returned to my bed and had scarcely composed myself, when Hortense knocked. I bade her come in. As she approached, I saw in her sisterly face an expression that sent my blood bounding.

She tried to be very natural and composed, and succeeded in being very unnatural and flustered. She took my proffered hand nervously, and seating herself, lifted it to her lips, and kissed it again and again, absently, and then sat patting it gently while she looked at me, with great tears in her eyes.

"What is it, sister? Please don't sit there looking like that, and keeping me waiting with my heart in my throat," I said, my voice choked to a whisper.

"Why, what; what do you mean, Felix?" she answered, affecting surprise.

"Ah, Hortense, Hortense; try to fool me after all these years of looking into your face for tidings. Do go on—do!"

She dropped her head, still caressing my hand, as she asked confusedly

"Did you hear anything, Felix? Any noise? any sound?"

"Why, no; what was it? What do you mean!" I cried, rising bolt upright, forgetting that Hortense did not know that I could hold my head up.

"Oh, for pity's sake, don't do that way!" she pleaded, as she tried to force me down.

"Hortense, leave me alone!" I entreated, impatiently. "You and that husband of yours have bullied me until I am afraid to move, in your presence. If I must confess it and get scolded, I tell you I had been up, walking about my room just before you came in. Now, sit down and tell me what it is, before you compel me to go and find out for myself!"



She sat down, and having overcome somewhat, her surprise, went on, assuming again an air of unimportance:

"I thought maybe, you might have heard the piano."

"What, Elsie's piano? the one in her room?" I interrupted. "Oh, Hortense, did she play? Oh, tell me she did, sister, and see the windows of heaven open to a soul that has lain through hopeless years as through a starless night!"

"No, no, Felix. No, no; she did not play—not quite that," she answered, half alarmed.

"Oh, Hortense, what could be but 'not quite that,' and not suffice to lift my weary, waiting soul into the uttermost heaven!" I cried, confusedly. "Go on! Go on!" I added. "I am mad to interrupt such tidings!"

"It is only this, Felix: Elsie asked me to sing that song you used, after uncle's death, to love to hear her sing, 'The Mystical Isle,' you called it, though perhaps that is not its name. And though I had not played the accompaniment for so long, I went to the piano and began, and when I reached that stanza beginning,

" 'There are hands that are waved when that fairy shore,'

I heard *her* voice, low and plaintive, but pure and sweet as of old, joining in the song. I could sing no more, my voice was so choked; but she went on and sang it through, and when a moment later I quitted the piano and returned to the bed, she lay with her hands clasped, her eyes looking upward, and her face radiant as if she beheld some heavenly vision."

As Hortense ended her voice was drowned in tears. For myself, only my soul lived, and to it the gates of heaven were indeed open.

I was quiet so very long that Hortense, becoming alarmed, arose and bent over me, calling my name.

I was afraid to speak. I motioned her to leave me. She sank back into the chair and sat, I know not how long; then arose, and after looking at me again for a moment, stole noiselessly out.

A clock in a distant steeple was striking the hour of



ten, when after a sleep (or was it trance?) in which I saw the angels ascending and descending, I awoke. I arose, opened the door, and peered cautiously about. Then stepping without, looked up and down the wide corridor. A dim light which only served to add to the oppressive stillness, burned at the farthest end. I moved forward, slowly, supporting my feeble steps by leaning with one hand against the wall. I reached the narrow, unlighted passage, leading to the other wing, and midway it, stopped to rest. My heart was beating violently, and my head was growing unsteady. But I had not much farther to go; so, moving on more slowly, I reached the corridor, at the end of which were Elsie's rooms. But soon the dizziness had increased till I was obliged to pause. I sank down and leaned against the wall. As I sat there, scarcely seeing, I heard the notes of the piano, as if touched lightly, and in a moment the voice of Hortense, singing in strains so low that they were scarcely audible. I crawled on, leaning heavily on the wall, and in a moment was at a point from which I could see the door of Elsie's room. It was open.

I knew that a few feet further on and in the recess of the door of the nurse's room I could see Elsie's bed from head to foot. I crawled thither, and hid myself within the deep recess, but for the moment was too blind to see.

I could still hear the low, plaintive notes of the piano and the soft voice of Hortense, singing the song she had sung in the evening. She had reached the very stanza of which she had spoken, when clear and unmistakable arose the voice of Elsie, its notes as pure and faultless as of old:

“There are hands that are waved when that fairy shore  
By mirage is lifted in air,  
And we sometimes hear through its turbulent roar,  
Sweet voices we heard in the days gone before,  
When the wind down the river is fair.”

With a great effort, I lifted my head and looked, and lo! there against a bank of pillows reclined Elsie.

Ah! she had indeed come home, and I had looked upon her face again.



I crawled back along the wall and into the dark and narrow passage.

A half hour later, the Doctor having failed to find me in my bed, came this way in search of me. He helped me to my room, and on hearing my story, said not a word, but going to the window stood looking out into the darkness.

Somehow the sight of Elsie had wrought a strange transformation in me. I lay as if in a trance of ecstasy. Nothing disturbed, nothing vexed me. My friends did not appear to understand this, and talked more and more of Elsie and her state. I heard all they said, eagerly, but asked few questions. *My darling had come back from captivity, and my soul was satisfied.*

At length I was able to arise and dress myself, and to walk about the corridors. It was the afternoon of the third day of my being about, when the Doctor and Hortense came in, their faces full of an unusual aspect. They sat one on each side of me, each holding a hand.

The Doctor's voice quavered as he spoke:

"Felix, we have told her that you are to arrive this evening, and she is expecting you with restless eagerness."

"Yes," interjected Hortense, "she has gone to the window twenty times since hearing that you would come to-night, and looking down the street, toward the river, clasped her hands so pathetically that I could not bear to look at her."

"My dear, why speak of that to Felix?" expostulated the Doctor.

I felt the blood receding to my heart, and the bells jangled again, and I closed my eyes, praying Heaven to grant me courage, when, as thrice before in great exigencies, the voice of my mother whispered as if she stood at my side: "Remember your father's integrity and courage, my son," and it stilled my perturbed blood, even as the voice of the Christ stilled the waters of the storm-smitten sea. I opened my eyes and looked at my companions with an expression that surprised and gladdened the heart of Hortense, for I heard the whispered ejaculation: "Thank God!"



"Doctor, Hortense," I began, "have you reflected upon this meeting? Of the effect my present appearance may have on her poor, sensitive mind and heart? Have you reflected of the Felix she is expecting?"

"Bring me that picture, taken just before she was carried away," I went on, turning to Hortense. She brought it.

"Look!" I continued; "there is the lover she is expecting. Look at that fresh, boy face, the happiest on which the sun, in all his journey about the earth, shone. Look at that hair, hanging to the shoulders, and lustrous as the mane of an Arabian steed. Look at those eyes that, even through this imperfect art, shine like stars. Look upon that full, smooth, unwrinkled, seamless, joyous face!" And then turning the picture down, I went on: "Now, look upon this figure!"

But they could not; they were blind with tears.

I awaited, quietly, tearlessly, for their emotions to subside.

"True," I resumed, less pathetically. "True, my hair is long now, as then; but see, it is all streaked with gray, and sparse and lusterless as the hair of one stricken in years. And look ye, on this face; well-nigh fleshless, seamed and hard. And my eyes; they wear the aspect seen in the pictures of the tenants of dungeons, who have passed through 'the ordeal of fire,' or been broken on the 'wheel.'"

And then after some pause I resumed, for my companions were speechless:

"Ah! she must not look upon my face at once; it would surely drive back her returning reason into night and oblivion. There must, I tell you, be little or no light when I meet her. She must hear my voice, and it alas, has lost its resonance and music, and is querulous, I fear me. But I must speak with her, prepare her somewhat for the apparition, the ghost of her lover, on which she must at last, but not at once, look."

It was so agreed, and my friends took their leave, while I, exhausted by the scene, threw myself upon my bed and fell into a disturbed and fitful sleep.

When I awoke, the sun was behind the trees, and a



gentle breeze, bearing the odor of flowers, blew through my room.

I proceeded about my toilet. Ah! with what anxious care did I adjust each garment and smooth my hair, painfully striving to restore somewhat of the appearance of other days, taking the likeness for my guide. But at the end, the portrait simply mocked me. I fancied I could see an insuppressible smile upon the smooth young face; and in my perplexity I flung it far from me.

But now began to grow within my soul an impatient longing. Would the darkness never come?

It did come at last, laying its sable wing upon all the earth, for it was a moonless night.

And then the Doctor came to accompany me, leaving Hortense with Elsie.

We started; at first quite rapidly, but as we entered the narrow passage connecting the two wings, my heart fainted within me as the bells jangled again; the very thing the Doctor had anticipated, and had caused a lounge to be placed there. I lay down while my companion administered a draught of wine. This strengthened me, and I arose and moved forward. But as we reached the door of her room, my knees smote each other and I leaned heavily upon my friend. Through the transom shone a light, but so dim as to show only the merest outline of an object.

At length, not allowing myself to think or reflect, I opened the door and entered, speaking her name as I did so: "Elsie—darling!"

"Felix, my own, my own dear Felix!" she faltered, and she was lying once more upon my heart, her dear arms embracing me.

I have said before, I believe, that there are times when speech is sacrilege, and grates upon the ear like discords in the music of a harp. We were silent. No sound broke the stillness save only the sobs of Hortense, as taking her husband's arm they quitted the room, leaving us alone.

An hour later, Hortense entered, and at a sign from me turned the light up; and Elsie reclining upon many



pillows, looked calmly upon my face for a long moment, then murmured, but loud enough for Hortense to hear:

“My darling boy!”

And Hortense was not surprised, for joy had transfigured my countenance, driving from it all the scars and seams.

\* \* \* \* \*

On the following May-day—a day on which the heavens were full of suns and the earth of blossoms and perfume, standing beneath an arch of flowers, from the center whereof hung an anchor of roses, Elsie became my wife, and all the bells of the city rang.

---

## CHAPTER XXI.

RETURN—REMORSE—DESPAIR—DEATH. THE END.

It was on a golden autumn afternoon, seven years later, that Elsie and I sat in the library, the scene of so much of sorrow and of joy—and the one spot dearest to our hearts. I was reading aloud, while she, her eyes bent lovingly upon my face, listened in rapt attention, when an officer was ushered in. He informed me that there was at the “Friendly Inn” a person urgent to see me.

This inn had been in large part endowed by the munificence of my wife, as a memorial of her escape from captivity. And I had so often aided the inmates there, that I supposed, naturally, that the person was one seeking alms. I asked the officer whom I knew for a discreet man, if I might not send some money by him. He was reluctant to take it. He was quite sure that the man did not seek pecuniary aid. “He says,” proceeded the officer, “he must see you before he dies.” I looked at my wife. Her eyes were full of compassion, as she said in accents of pity: “Go, Felix.” This was enough. I drove at once to the inn.



I was shown into the reception room, where, in an invalid's chair, sat a man apparently in the last stage of pulmonary consumption. He wore the aspect of premature age. His hair, hanging about his shoulders, and his beard of great length, and both showing evidence of scrupulous care, were white as wool. He was gigantic in stature, but his frame was fleshless. But for his hair and the great, blue veins on brow and hands, he would have had the appearance of a skeleton—a skeleton, with eyes. And such eyes! Great, dark globes, and shining with an almost appalling light.

The appearance of the man was so striking and impressive, that it arrested and held me dumb. The matron of the Inn sat in the room with him.

“This is the gentleman whom you sent the officer to fetch,” she said.

A look of disappointment passed across the skeleton face and shone in the eyes.

“No, no,” he answered in a hollow voice that almost stopped my breath. “No, no; the gentleman I wish to see is the lawyer; a man little above thirty in years. I am sorry,” he went on, addressing me, “to have troubled you, sir; but I gave explicit instructions as to the person I desire to see.”

I stepped forward, removing my hat, and took a seat near him. “I am,” I said, “the only person of my name, lawyer or layman, in the city.”

As I began to speak, he started, bending on me a gaze which thrilled me.

“O my God!” he cried in that unearthly voice, and clasping his hands. “It cannot be! Surely this cannot be he who was the youth I knew!” And his bosom heaved, and his whole frame shook, as the tears ran down his bony cheeks, into his white beard.

“So old,” he went on; “so broken, so gray! his face so marked and seamed with care; and yet he never harmed a human being, not even me whom he ought to have slain, but was too merciful!”

“Ah, yes!” I groaned.

“O my God!” he went on, as if I had not spoken; “I had hoped for pardon till now; but no, no, my sin is



unpardonable. I am a million times worse than a murderer. It would have been benign pity to have slain them outright. But ah, no, I was not manly and generous enough to do that; I must murder them by inches; must drive the innocent girl whom he had loved and who had loved him from childhood, to despair and madness.

"Ah, madame," he continued, turning toward the matron; "I did all this! I, the wicked, the heartless Castelar, did this worse than murderous deed! And yet have hoped for mercy—for pardon! Why, I doubted the existence of God, of heaven, of hell, until I saw the enormity of my crime against these loving hearts. Then I knew there must be a hell; a place, a state somewhere, to punish such offence. And like a coward, I thought to escape my desert. For two years I have endeavored to reach this city that I might implore your pardon, your forgiveness, sir. But now that I see you, my wretched heart fails me. How shall I ask mercy, who showed none!"

He paused, panting for breath; but still he wept, while his great chest rose and fell like an angry sea.

I could not speak. I shame to confess it; but at the moment I could scarcely restrain myself from falling upon, and rending him.

I found myself nervously fingering my knife under an impulse to slay him. In a devilish frenzy, I fairly gloated on his agony, and was conscious of looking upon him with a sort of savage joy, as his bosom swelled, and his speech was interrupted by a painful, hollow cough that wrenched his great frame.

He went on:

"When *she* saw me appear in the boat, she was seized with despair, and flew from me, and before I could arrest her, had thrown herself into the river. My men were out in boats searching for her companion, who had escaped. I threw myself in after her, but was unable to rescue her. I supposed she had drowned."

He paused again.

"Rescue her, you damned fiend! Rescue her, you hell-deserving wretch! Ten thousand times I have



thanked Heaven that you did not *rescue* her!" I cried, in my impotent rage. But on noting the aspect of his face now, I stopped.

Lifting his trembling hands and extending them toward me, while his eyes shone with a light unearthly, he cried in piteous accents:

"Oh, thank you, sir! Thanks, ten thousand thanks for these words! Oh, sir, pour upon my accursed head every malediction which tongue has framed since the dawn of speech, and I will bless you for it!"

Then tearing apart the garments which covered his surging bosom, he entreated:

"Oh, sir, if you will but slay me now, late as it is, my life may atone somewhat my unutterable crime! Please withhold not your avenging hand! Please strike!"

Seeing that I drew back, his whole manner changed, as still with bosom bared, he went on in a voice almost fierce in its despair:

"I appeal to you by the memory of the love you bore that sweet girl, whom I tore from your embrace and drove to despair, to hopeless madness and a lingering death, to strike, if you are not a miserable craven, and unworthy the love that angel bore you!

"Ah, you will not? I am denied even the consolation of being slain at the hand of him I have undone! But if you will not strike, will you not pray for me? Oh, will you not ask God to forgive me? He will hear *you*. He *must* hear you; though to me the heavens are brass and His ears deaf!"

He struggled to rise, but had not strength.

The suffering and remorse of the dying wretch moved my soul to pity. I remembered, now, that it had been about the time of her restoration, widely published that Elsie had died, and that the story of her death had been accompanied with many details of her insanity and its cause. I think the discovery that Castelar had seen this story and therefore suffered the more on account of it, served to appease somewhat my anger and bitterness.

For the moment I forgot his great crime and



thought only of his agony; and that shortly he must render account to One who can make no mistakes, and to whom vengeance belongeth. If this was undue tenderness, be it so. From the best and bravest of mothers, I inherited the inestimable patrimony of a compassionate heart.

"I need to pray for myself, sir, after the awful emotions the sight of you has stirred within my soul," I said, humbly. "A moment ago," I went on, "I longed to slay you. I should be a fool, however, to do so, were I even wicked enough, and I fear I am—since your sufferings are infinitely greater than would be the brief pangs of dying. No, no, I suffered you to escape *then*; I will not stain my hands and soul with your blood now, when to do so will prevent nothing, retrieve nothing. But I am human, and you cannot blame me if I can look upon your agony with slight pity."

"I do not blame you! No, no, I thank you sir, for every word which may add one pang to my suffering," he answered. And then struggling to arise, he went on with more vehemence than ever:

"Oh, my God, what have I not suffered! Look at my hair, my beard, my wrinkled face, my bent form, my fleshless frame; and yet, I am little older in years than yourself. Think not that I speak to arouse your pity. No, no; I wish you to believe that though I behaved like one, I am not a *fiend*! My crime wrought my own ruin more effectually than yours. I was a millionaire; within a year I was penniless! I had palaces; in less than a year I was homeless—a wanderer, a vagabond! I had friends who would have died for me; in a day I was friendless, a tramp, a beggar! For nine years I have not seen the face of a friend, nor felt the grasp of a friendly hand in mine. Seven years ago I came hither, disguised. Day after day I saw you lead her forth; saw your patient, loving care of her. Twice I tried to go to you, throw myself at your feet and pray your forgiveness, but had not the courage. I determined to surrender myself into the custody of the law, but at the last moment, shrank from that.

"I was about to go away, when a longing that con-



sumed me and would take no denial, seized me—a longing to look upon her face again. Oh, I was mad, sir! Night after night I lurked in the grounds about her home. At last, as if Pity herself had pleaded my cause and had prevailed, the hour had come. She was left alone, sleeping. In a moment I was bending over her, gazing into her face, placid and beautiful as the face of an angel. I hoped, I prayed that you might, discovering, slay me. But, ah, my hated presence frightened from her even the blessed angel of sleep. She awoke, suddenly. For a brief moment she looked into my accursed face. The terror it inspired in her poor heart sufficed to put even her madness to flight. You know, alas, too well, what followed. I had completed the work begun long before. I had murdered her.

“After days of hiding, half starved and utterly hopeless I wandered away again, longing to die. Even death fled my approach, though I sought him in all his lurking places. At last nothing but continued life or suicide remained. I shrank from suicide for fear of its consequences.

“Two years ago consumption laid hold on me; and as if it were a child of my loins, I have nourished it.

“I have waded streams through floating ice, faced the most violent storms, inhaled, ah, reveled for days, in deadly miasma, through which other men, wearing amulets, charms and defences, hasten with bated breath. And yet sir, and yet my cruel and accursed heart throbs on, as if immortal flesh, or living adamant, and my blood molten steel!”

As he finished with great effort, and with eyes that seemed starting from their sockets, this awful recital, he was falling forward. I sought to stay the fall, but could not reach him in time, to more than partially break its severity.

He lay on his side gasping, while I still essayed to aid him.

“Leave me! Leave me!” he gasped.

“Touch me not, with your pure and stainless hands. But if you can, Felix (if I may speak your name



again), forgive me! Ask God to forgive me! Ask her gentle spirit—”

But he could not finish; he was dying.

“I forgive you, Otto Castelar; I forgive you with all my heart,” I faltered, kneeling beside him.

But ere I had ended, he was dead.

\* \* \* \* \*

When I returned home, the night had fallen, and Elsie sat in the library awaiting me. She arose as I entered, and came toward me saying, her voice full of compassion:

“Ah, my dear, I trust you were able to comfort the poor wretch.” But just then the light fell fairly upon my face. At sight of it, her own blanched to deadly whiteness, and she would have fallen had I not taken her in my arms.

Helping her into the easy chair she had just quitted, I kneeled at her side, taking her hands in mine and smiling, ghastly enough, no doubt, into her face.

It was some moments before she could speak, and when at last she did, there was a shadow of the old terror in her eyes:

“O Felix, it was *he!*” she whispered.

“Yes; and he is dead! Dead of remorse!” I faltered.

And in all the days of the years that she lived after her return from captivity, never, save this once, did either of us speak of *Otto Castelar*.

(Signed.)

FELIX MUNRO.

*Terra Alta, A. D. 1886.*

THE END.



# VALUABLE QUESTIONS,

To supplement those of your text-books. You can test and greatly increase the knowledge of your pupils by giving them questions and problems not found in their text-books. For this purpose there is nothing better than

## THE COUNTY SUPERINTENDENTS' QUESTIONS.

**GEOGRAPHY.—About 1000 Questions.**

Price Reduced to 15 Cts. Five Copies 60 Cts

### CONTENTS:

GENERAL DEFINITIONS.  
MATHEMATICAL AND PHYSICAL.  
GENERAL QUESTIONS—THE WORLD.  
NORTH AMERICA.  
THE UNITED STATES.  
NEW ENGLAND STATES.  
MIDDLE AND SOUTH ATLANTIC STATES.  
GULF STATES.  
CENTRAL STATES.

WESTERN STATES AND TERRITORIES.  
PACIFIC STATES.  
MEXICO, CENTRAL AMERICA.  
WEST INDIES.  
SOUTH AMERICA.  
EUROPE.  
ASIA.  
AFRICA.  
OCEANICA.


**ARITHMETIC.—About 1000 Questions.**

Price Reduced to 15 Cts. Five Copies 60 Cts.

### CONTENTS:

FIRST PRINCIPLES.  
MULTIPLICATION AND DIVISION.  
FACTORING.  
GREATEST COM. DIV. AND L. C. M.  
FRACTIONS.  
COMPOUND NUMBERS.  
LONGITUDE AND TIME.  
DECIMALS.  
PERCENTAGE.  
INTEREST.

PROFIT AND LOSS.  
DISCOUNT.  
STOCKS AND COMMISSION.  
PARTNERSHIP.  
RATIO, PROPORTION.  
PROGRESSION.  
MENSURATION.  
SQUARE AND CUBE ROOT.  
MISCELLANEOUS.

 These questions and problems are all good. They are not pedantic or "catches." They have been carefully selected from lists furnished by the County Superintendents of INDIANA, ILLINOIS, IOWA, WISCONSIN and PENNSYLVANIA.

They are worth ten times their price, when you are in a hurry to find questions for examination day, or something new for drill.

**T. S. DENISON, Publisher,**  
163 Randolph St., CHICAGO.



# PRANKS AND PASTIMES.

## A NEW BOOK.

BY MARY J. JACQUES,

Author of "WORK AND PLAY."

This is a book brimful of all sorts of good things with which to beguile an evening. Young persons at a loss to know how to amuse a few friends at an evening party, will find here just what they want. The Exercises have very Great Variety, and are suitable for PARLOR, SCHOOL, CHURCH, or LITERARY ENTERTAINMENTS.

THEY ARE JUST THE THING FOR AN EVENING BY THE FIRESIDE.

### CONTENTS.

STIRRING GAMES (11 Games.)	ODDS AND ENDS (5 Games.)
TALKING " (13 Games.)	CHARADES (12 Pieces.)
GUESSING " (13 Games.)	PANTOMIMES (7 Pieces.)
WRITING GAMES (7 Games.)	SHADOW SCENES.

Illustrations of the Poets. (Numerous Capital Things.)

PUZZLEDOM—Watch Puzzle, Arithmetic Puzzles, Enigmas, Conundrums, Intellectual Feasts, Bishop's Puzzle, Anagrams, Charades, Riddles.

PRICE—Cloth Back, Manila Sides, 50 cents.

# THE DEBATER'S HAND-BOOK.

By A. J. KINNAMAN.

The publisher believe this book will fill a place occupied by no other. It is not only a manual of parliamentary usages, but a careful and complete guide to all matters pertaining to ORGANIZATION.

In the matter of PARLIAMENTARY USAGES it is full and accurate. It contains a CHART which shows at a glance the order of precedence of most of the points which may possibly arise. *This feature alone is worth the price of the book.* It gives in brief space all essentials of parliamentary usages as applied to:

Lodges, G. A. R. Posts,  
High School Societies,  
Literary and Debating Clubs,  
Town and Ward Meetings,  
Political Conventions, Etc.

DEBATING CLUBS will find this book unequalled. It tells you all about how to start the machinery. *How to outline and prepare a debate.* It gives *full debates* so that the inexperienced speaker may know about what he is expected to say, and how much is required to fill his allotted time.

IN ORGANIZATION the "Debater's Hand-Book" excels. It begins with the first steps and gives a *model organization*. Also models for *Constitution, By-Laws, Expense Accounts, etc.*

PRICE, CLOTH, 50 CENTS.

T. S. DENISON, Publisher,

163 Randolph Street,

CHICAGO, ILL.

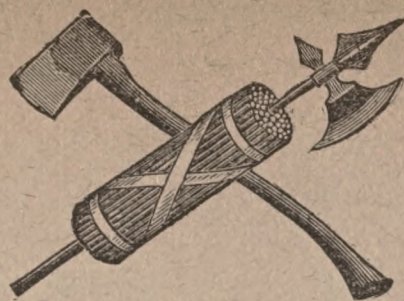


# DENISONS' SERIES

—OF—

—BY—

POPULAR  
BOOKS



NOTED  
AUTHORS

ISSUED MONTHLY.

NEW BOOKS, CLEAR TYPE, GOOD PAPER.

The handsomest books in the market, cover in THREE COLORS, with a beautiful design made expressly for Denison's Series.

**NO TRASHY BOOKS! NO DULL BOOKS!**

"An attractive series."—*Springfield (Mass.) Republican*.

"T. S. Denison has his new and attractive series fairly launched."—*Ohio State Journal*.

**No. 1. THE MAN BEHIND**, by T. S. Denison, author of "An Iron Crown." Cloth, \$1.50  
Paper..... 50 cents.

"A truth to human nature in generals and details, which is uncommon. The public which is not suffering from over-production of that kind ought to be glad of it and want more of it."—W. D. HOWELLS in *Harper's Magazine*, October, 1888.

"From preface to finish it is of entrancing character."—*Albany Press*.

**No. 2. THE GAMBLER**, by F. B. Wilkie, (cloth \$1.25)..... 50 cents.

"It sustains one's interest from beginning to end by rare qualities of matter, style and thought."—*Chicago Tribune*.

**No. 3. THE HONORABLE MRS. VEREKER**, by the Duchess..... 25 cents.

"More enjoyable than if it were wiser."—*Boston Herald*.

**No. 4. BEYOND COMPARE**, by Charles Gibbon..... 25 cents.

"The story is managed very skilfully. The characters are drawn with much strength and care."—*Philadelphia Record*.

**No. 5. BREEZIE LANGTON**, a story of the Crimean War, Capt. Hawley Smart... 25 cents.

"Breezie Langton, the fifth of Denison's Series, like those that have preceded, is full of interest."—*San Francisco Call*.

**No. 6. THE DEVIL'S DIE**, by Grant Allen..... 25 cents.

"The story itself is out of the ordinary rut of fiction, and is fascinating to a high degree. The plot includes the mysterious practices of the Hindoos, and many of the situations are startling to those unfamiliar with the arts and devices of that crafty race."—*Utica Press*.

**No. 7. AN IRON CROWN**, by T. S. Denison, author of "The Man Behind,"... (cloth \$1.50)

Paper..... 50 cents.

"Whether or not the great American novel has been written remains to be decided after this book shall have been widely read."—*Chicago Evening Journal*.

"The Man Behind" and "An Iron Crown" are destined to become classics, and are suited for reading in literary clubs.

**No. 8. FASHION'S FOLLIES AND SOCIETY'S ABOMINATIONS**, by Eminent Thinkers..... 25 cents.

This is one of the raciest and most readable books ever published. The topics which are dealt with, although many of them are of a delicate nature, are handled with a delightful and instructive freedom and boldness.

**No. 9. THE ROMANTIC STORY OF WICKLY'S WOODS**, by H. W. Taylor. Just out  
A delightful story, a classic in treatment (cloth \$1.00)..... 25 cents.

**No. 10. BROKEN LIVES**, by Cyrus F. McNutt, a dramatic and powerful story of the Wabash Country (cloth, \$1.00). Just out..... 25 cents.

Teachers usually get a discount of 20 per cent. from dealers. I will do as well and mail them any book named on this page post paid at 20 per cent. discount. This does not apply to any books except those named on this page.

**T. S. DENISON,**

**163 Randolph Street,**

**CHICAGO, ILL.**



# EASY EXPERIMENTS

WITH

## Home-Made Apparatus, which Pupils can easily make,

---

Directions are given for making beautiful and interesting experiments, illustrating the principles of chemistry, natural philosophy, physical geography, physiology and the natural sciences in general, at little or no expense. Full instructions are given how to make the experiments, how to construct the articles of apparatus required, how to explain the phenomena of the natural world, etc. Among the many interesting and instructive experiments are:

**How to make** alcohol lamps, siphons, retorts, etc.

**Water** made to boil with a snow ball, freeze a cup to the floor in a heated room, etc.

**Pressure of the Air.** Several interesting experiments.

**Revolution of the Earth.** How to illustrate.

**Light.** To make an artificial rainbow, prisms, etc.

**Electricity.** How to make several electrical machines; a number of experiments without apparatus are also given.

**Various Experiments.** To tell the distance of a thunder-storm, to make a Will-o'-the-wisp, balloon, ice gun, thunder powder, lead tree, etc.

**Blackboards.** To make a good one for 20 cents. *Do not be without a good supply of boards any longer.*

**Inks and Colors.** A valuable collection.

**How to take Pictures.**

**How to make Colored Fire.** With many other curious and useful things.

**Everything** described can be made with little or no expense. The above is only a small part of what it contains. Such experiments will set pupils to thinking—will give them much pleasant information. No book of its size gives as much material for valuable work as this.

**ENLARGED EDITION, LIMP CLOTH, 30 CTS.**

---

# CHOICE PIECES FOR LITTLE PEOPLE.

A fresh collection of the very best things for the little folks, consisting of:

**Very Short Pieces of a Few Lines Only, for the Smallest Tots.**

**Pieces Illustrating a Moral.**

**Pieces about Birds, Animals, and Flowers.**

**Funny Rhymes and Jingles.**

**Pieces to be Read or Spoken.**

**Dialogues and Charades.**

In fact a large variety from which to select for almost any occasion, and

**ALL THE VERY BEST.**

A gem among this class of books. Suitable for schools, Sunday-schools or parlor.

**Price, Paper Cover, 25 Cents.**























LIBRARY OF CONGRESS



00022853934

